



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**News Release**

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GOVERNOR

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**NEW MEDICARE BENEFITS MAY SPUR POTENTIAL  
FRAUD SCHEMES  
SENIORS URGED TO PROTECT THEMSELVES**

HONOLULU - Medicare recipients should be aware of potential fraud schemes that may arise with the introduction of the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan on October 1, 2005. Seniors should be aware of the program benefits, enrollment dates and how to protect themselves from becoming a victim of identity theft.

Pat Sasaki, Director of The Executive Office on Aging states, "With all of the recent changes to the Medicare system, including the addition of a new prescription drug benefit, there may be confusing and misleading information in the community. As part of the public outreach effort, the Social Security Administration has contracted with NCS Pearson, Inc. and its partner, West Corporation, to conduct follow-up telephone calls and offer program assistance to individuals who have not responded to the Application for Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (Form SSA-1020). We encourage people to call our office if they have any questions or concerns."

According to FBI Supervisory Special Agent Gregory J. Gilmartin of the Honolulu Division's White Collar Crime/Health Care Fraud Unit, "The FBI is very concerned about potential fraud schemes that can affect Hawaii's elderly and disabled population."

The FBI strongly recommends that individuals with Medicare protect their Medicare number and their personal information. The FBI encourages the public to call the FBI Honolulu Division's Health Care Fraud Hotline at (808) 566-4232 to report anything suspicious. Callers may leave a confidential message and an FBI Special Agent will contact them for an interview.

(more)

Here are some helpful tips to protect you from identity theft and fraud:

**Keep all personal information, such as your Medicare number, safe.**

- Protect your Medicare number as you would your credit card information.

**Become familiar with the Social Security Administration, and the Medicare Program benefits, rules and enrollment dates to avoid false or improper enrollment.**

- Medicare Prescription Drug Plans cannot begin marketing their products until October 1, 2005.
- Enrollment in the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan cannot begin until November 15, 2005.
- **ONLY the Social Security Administration, NCS Pearson, Inc., and West Corporation** are authorized to conduct follow-up telephone calls and offer program assistance.

**Be aware of possible “red flags” which can be early indicators to fraudulent activity.**

- Beware of individuals who come to your home uninvited to sell or endorse any Medicare-related product.
- Beware of individuals who offer a “free gift” for your enrollment into a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan in exchange for your Medicare or Social Security number.

The Executive Office on Aging’s SageWatch Program is available to answer any questions concerning issues of fraud and provide assistance with your medical services or billings. Call (808) 586-7281 or toll-free at 1-(800) 296-9422.

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