



Preventing Medicare Fraud

## ND SMP Scam of the Month – January 2023

### Beware of Common Medical Equipment Scams

As different types of scams come and go, one type remains constant: durable medical equipment, or DME, schemes. DME includes medical devices and supplies that are prescribed by a person's doctor, can withstand repeated use, serve a medical purpose, and can be used in the home. Examples include braces, orthotics, and mobility aids such as walkers, canes, crutches, and wheelchairs.

Scammers call people and offer 'free' braces, claiming that Medicare will fully cover these materials. Medicare only covers 80% for DME, and if you are in pain, you should always talk to your doctor about what they recommend. We have received reports of beneficiaries agreeing to be mailed one back brace but receive packages holding multiple, unneeded braces for a variety of body parts. Many of these braces cost almost \$1,000, meaning that this type of fraud increases the cost of Medicare for everyone.

Beneficiaries who give out their Medicare numbers are also at risk of having their medical identities stolen. They may receive equipment or genetic testing kits they don't want or need and could even be left responsible for large bills for these items. This type of fraud can be stopped. The SMP suggests people take the following steps:

- Be sure your doctor has assessed your condition and orders any necessary equipment or supplies.
- Never sign a blank form from your health care provider or equipment supplier.
- Always read your Medicare Summary Notice (MSN) or Explanation of Benefits (EOB). Look for charges for equipment you do not need, never requested, or did not receive.
- If you rent and return medical equipment, always get a dated receipt.
- Protect your Medicare and Social Security cards as you would your credit cards.
- Do not accept products or services from strangers who call or knock on your door.
- Do not give out your Medicare number to a supplier during a sales pitch or an unsolicited phone call.
- Do not accept money, gifts, or unnecessary equipment or supplies from a supplier in exchange for your Medicare number.

**Reporting Medicare fraud:** If you think you have spotted fraud, report it right away. ND SMP will help seniors prevent, detect and report Medicare fraud. If you see anything suspicious, contact the ND SMP at [ndsmp@minotstateu.edu](mailto:ndsmp@minotstateu.edu) or call 1-833-818-0029 or 701-858-3580. For non-Medicare fraud issues, contact the ND Attorney General's Office at 1-800-472-2600.

The information provided is intended to be a general summary only. Source of information: Senior Medicare Patrol Program. (September, 2021). Press Release for DME. SMP Resource Center.

**North Dakota Senior Medicare Patrol Phone: 833-818-0029 or (701) 858-3580**

For more information or to locate your SMP, visit <https://ndcpd.org/smp/>

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