



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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**SENIORS ADVISED TO WITHOLD MEDICARE AND SOCIAL SECURITY
INFORMATION IF CONTACTED BY PHONE**

HONOLULU -- The Hawai'i State Department of Health (DOH) Executive Office on Aging is warning individuals who receive Medicare or Social Security benefits to safeguard their identification and Social Security numbers, and not share this information with anyone who phones a home and makes this request.

"We have received reports that individuals are calling members and identifying themselves as staff of Medicare, Social Security, or one of our local health plans and asking for their Medicare and Social Security numbers," said Noemi Pendleton, director, Executive Office on Aging (EOA).

"If Social Security, Medicare, or a Medicare contracted plan calls *you*, they will NOT ask for that information," said Pendleton. "They may ask for a birth date, or an address. Or, if they are calling from a health plan, they may ask for your health plan ID number. That's the only information they will ever request."

Pendleton notes that individuals who contact Medicare or Social Security *may* be asked for a Medicare or Social Security number to verify who they claim to be. "The difference is that when you initiate the call, this verification is for your protection," she said.

(more)

On October 1, 2007, Medicare health and drug plans began marketing their 2008 products. By law, representatives for these agencies are allowed to phone consumers directly at home; marketing “door-to-door” is not permitted unless consumers invite a representative into their home. The EOA advises against any home visit and recommends that information be shared in either a neutral location or by mail.

Another way to get information about Medicare, prescription drug coverage, or a Hawai'i health plan that supplements Medicare coverage, is to call Sage PLUS, Hawai'i's State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) at (808) 586-7299 (O'ahu) or toll free at 1-888-875-9229 (Neighbor Islands and the mainland).

Finally, if you think you have been a victim of fraud or believe someone has tampered with your Medicare benefits, call SMP Hawai'i (formerly known as SageWatch), at 586-7281 (O'ahu) or 1-800-296-9422 (Neighbor Islands).

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