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For Immediate Release

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News Release **Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program**

Medicare Fraud No.1 Senior Scam in Michigan

Lansing, Michigan, March 19, 2013 - If you are a senior in Michigan, beware of your phone.

Pam Curtis, the CEO of Senior Resources in West Michigan, wants older people and their caregivers to know about Medicare fraud. "Scammers are calling people and promising free health care services. They are telling them that their doctors have authorized wheelchairs and back braces. They are saying they are from Medicare and need people's Medicare numbers."

"All of this is a scam. We heard from one doctor in Muskegon, Michigan who had received a fax from a medical equipment company. They wanted him to sign it and fax it back. He did not authorize a back brace for his patient. It was a scam, pure and simple," said Curtis.

Bettie Hughes runs the Senior Medicare Patrol for Southeast Michigan. The Patrol, or SMP as it is called, reaches out to older people about fraud. They counsel people who have received suspicious calls. "People need to know that nothing is free. When they are called about 'free' home care, or 'free' wheelchairs, raise a red flag. Don't be lured. Medicare pays. Taxpayers are ripped off."

The Senior Medicare Patrol is funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) / Administration on Aging (AoA), the federal agency for seniors. This year an estimated \$60 billion nationally is going into the pockets of scam artists and yes, criminals. "That's \$60 billion from taxpayers that could have gone to health care," said Hughes.

The SMP is a program of the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP) and serves all of Michigan. The doorway to report fraud is 1-800-803-7174. Seniors can use this same number to get help with billing or prescription drug plan choices.

“We heard from a senior who was told they could help her qualify for prescription drug help. They wanted \$39.95. You don’t need to spend \$39.95 to get help with prescription drug costs. That’s what our free hotline is for. We will help you with anything Medicare related. It won’t cost you a dime,” said Hughes. “If you qualify for drug assistance, you have put money in your pocket.”



Call the Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program – 1-800-803-7174 – for free help understanding your Medicare benefit and to report calls or e-mail that sound like they could be fraud. Anita Salustro, Senior Medicare Patrol, anita@mmapinc.org