

Scams Wind Up as the COVID-19 Pandemic Winds Down

The federal Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19 expired on May 11, 2023, and at that time federally funded programs returned to normal operations. This change in process had effects on many people and health care programs, including the temporary, yet significant, changes to Medicaid enrollment and eligibility that occurred during the pandemic. Over the course of the PHE, states were required to keep people enrolled in Medicaid even if they experienced a change in eligibility, such as an increase in income. However, as of April 1, 2023, states have resumed checking Medicaid eligibility through a process known as renewal or redetermination of Medicaid.

While states work through their Medicaid renewal processes, you should remember these facts to safeguard yourself against scams:

- Applying for Medicaid is always free. You do not need to pay anything or provide a credit card number when applying for benefits through your state.
- Renewal or redetermination of Medicaid benefits is always free.
- You do not need to pay to continue receiving Medicaid benefits.
- If you have moved, Medicaid may need to use methods other than mail to reach you. If you receive a call from someone claiming to be from Medicaid, tell them you will call Medicaid directly and use a trusted phone number to do so.

The SMP recommends that you should:

- Not answer calls from numbers you do not recognize.
- Guard your Medicare and Medicaid cards and numbers like credit card numbers.
- Not confirm your Medicare or Medicaid numbers to anyone who calls you over the phone.
- Never answer “yes” to any question over the phone from someone you do not know.
- Make sure your contact information is correct with Medicaid. This includes your correct mailing address, phone number, and email address.
- Reach out to the SMP if you were contacted by someone who was possibly trying to steal your information or benefits.

If you have questions or concerns about your Medicare or Medicaid benefits, please reach out the local State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) at shiphelp.org or 877-839-2675. The SHIP provides in depth, one-on-one insurance counseling and assistance with enrolling in Medicare if you lost Medicaid coverage.

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) is ready to provide you with the information you need to PROTECT yourself from Medicare fraud, errors, and abuse; DETECT potential fraud, errors, and abuse; and REPORT your concerns. SMPs help educate and empower Medicare beneficiaries in the fight against health care fraud. Your SMP can help you with your questions, concerns, or complaints about potential fraud and abuse issues. It also provides information and educational presentations. To locate your local Senior Medicare Patrol, call 1-877-808-2468 or visit www.smpresource.org.