

PUBLIC SAFETY BULLETIN: COVID-19 SCAMS

FRAUDSTERS ARE OFFERING COVID-19 TESTS, HHS GRANTS, AND MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION CARDS IN EXCHANGE FOR PERSONAL DETAILS,

BELOW YOU WILL FIND TIPS ON HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF.



The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General is alerting the public about fraud schemes related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Scammers are using telemarketing calls, text messages, social media platforms, and door-to-door visits to perpetrate COVID-19-related scams. Fraudsters are offering COVID-19 tests, HHS grants, and Medicare prescription cards in exchange for personal details, including Medicare information. **However, these services are unapproved and illegitimate.** These scammers use the coronavirus pandemic to benefit themselves, and beneficiaries face potential harm. The personal information collected can be used to fraudulently bill federal health care programs and commit medical identity theft.



Protect Yourself

- Be mindful of how you dispose of COVID-19 materials such as syringes, vials, vial container boxes, vaccination record cards, and shipment or tracking records. Improper disposal of these items could be used by bad actors to commit fraud.
- Offers to purchase COVID-19 vaccination cards are scams. Valid proof of COVID-19 vaccination can only be provided to individuals by legitimate providers administering vaccines.
- Photos of COVID-19 vaccination cards should not be shared on social media. Posting content that includes your date of birth, health care details or other personally identifiable information can be used to steal your identity.
- Be vigilant and protect yourself from potential fraud concerning COVID-19 vaccines. You will not be asked for money to enhance your ranking for vaccine eligibility. Government and state officials will not call you to obtain personal information in order to receive the vaccine.
- Beneficiaries should be cautious of unsolicited requests for their personal, medical, and financial information. Medicare will not call beneficiaries to offer COVID-19 related products, services, or benefit review.
- Be suspicious of any unexpected calls or visitors offering COVID-19 tests or supplies. If you receive a suspicious call, hang up immediately.
- Do not respond to or open hyperlinks in text messages about COVID-19 from unknown individuals.
- Ignore offers or advertisements for COVID-19 testing or treatments on social media sites. If you make an appointment for a COVID-19 test online, make sure the location is an official testing site.



- Do not give your personal or financial information to anyone claiming to offer HHS grants related to COVID-19.
- Be aware of scammers pretending to be COVID-19 contact tracers. Legitimate contact tracers will never ask for your Medicare number, financial information, or attempt to set up a COVID-19 test for you and collect payment information for the test.
- Scammers are using social media to perpetrate COVID-19-related scams. In one major scheme, fraudsters hack social media accounts and send direct messages to beneficiaries while posing as a friend or government employee. The impersonator claims the person is eligible for government grants (citing various reasons like COVID-19, disability, etc.) and urges them to call a phone number to collect the funds. Upon calling, the beneficiary is asked to pay a “processing fee” (using bank account information, gift cards, bitcoin) to receive the grant money. In return, targets of this scam never receive any money, but often large sums of their money are stolen from them. These alleged grants are entirely illegitimate.
- Fraudsters are also continuing to offer COVID-19 tests to Medicare beneficiaries in exchange for personal details, including Medicare information. However, the services are unapproved and illegitimate.
- In another fraud scheme, some medical labs are targeting retirement communities claiming to offer COVID-19 tests, but they are actually drawing blood and billing federal health care programs for medically unnecessary services.
- Also, fraudsters are offering people a \$200 Medicare prescription card when no such cards currently exist.
- If you suspect COVID-19 health care fraud, report it immediately online or call 800-HHS-TIPS (800-447-8477).

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