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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Medicare scammers targeting Virginians

- Callers claim to be insurers or from the government and threaten to terminate coverage -

RICHMOND (January 17, 2013) -Virginians are warned to protect their personal identity information following a spate of bogus calls to Medicare beneficiaries across the commonwealth in which callers threaten to terminate coverage or cut off Social Security checks if recipients refuse to provide requested information.

The Office of the Attorney General joins the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) in advising Medicare participants who receive one of these fraudulent calls to refuse to

give personal information such as Medicare or Social Security numbers, bank account numbers, credit or debit card numbers, or their date of birth in response to unsolicited telephone calls.

"It is critical to remember to never give out your personal or financial information when someone initiates a call to you. Instead, hang up and call the number for the organization that's published in the phone book, so you can be sure you are talking to the right people," said Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli. "If you suspect you've been a victim of medical identity theft, contact the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800-HHS-TIPS."

Medical identity thieves use high-pressure tactics to obtain Medicare and Social Security numbers, bank account information, or private insurance information. Callers try to confuse people into believing they represent the government or private insurers and threaten the loss of Social Security or Medicare coverage if beneficiaries refuse to cooperate.

"Unfortunately, during the Medicare enrollment period, scammers will try to take advantage of older Virginians," said DARS Commissioner Jim Rothrock. "It's important for beneficiaries to understand that Medicare will never call them to ask for personal information, including bank account or Social Security numbers."

Earlier this month, DARS' Division for the Aging began hearing from Medicare beneficiaries around the commonwealth about suspicious calls requesting personal identity information. Virginia's Senior Medicare Patrol program is also cautioning beneficiaries and caregivers, following recent complaints in the Lynchburg area regarding telemarketing calls offering free life alert systems accompanied by requests for personal information.

The complaints come as people who changed Medicare Advantage insurance plans receive information through the mail about their new coverage, which may lead them to think the calls are legitimate. The disenrollment period for those leaving a Medicare Advantage plan for "original" Medicare ends Feb. 14, while beneficiaries who enrolled in non-renewing plans have until Feb. 28 to select a new plan.

People can learn more about protecting themselves or loved ones from medical identity theft at www.medicare.gov/help-and-resources/identity-theft/identity-theft.html.

If you suspect medical identity theft, or feel like you gave your personal information to someone you shouldn't have, contact:

- the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Inspector General to report suspected fraud at 800-HHS-TIPS (800-447-8477) or TTY 800-377-4950 and online at <https://oig.hhs.gov/fraud/report-fraud/index.asp>
- the Senior Medicare Patrol at 800-938-8885 or www.virginiamp.org
- the attorney general's identity theft program to learn how to recover from identity theft at ag.virginia.gov, then click on Programs and Resources/ Identity Theft.

The attorney general and DARS will be releasing radio and TV public service announcements later this month to alert recipients and their families about the scams.

[More about Attorney General Cuccinelli](#)

[Photos of the attorney general](#)

A copy of this news release may be found on the attorney general's web site [here](#).



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