

Help protect your patients by providing medical ID protection - best practices

Published: Jan 1, 2020 - **State & Federal** / Medicare

Category; Medicare

Many of our members have reported that they received unsolicited calls (or emails) from an individual or company offering to provide durable equipment devices, such as back or leg braces, or items such as topical creams at little or no cost. While it may be tempting to want to receive something for free, members should know that there is a cost.

Although our members may not receive a bill for these devices or medications, the items are billed to the insurance companies, costing hundreds or even thousands of dollars each.

How does this impact members?

Members should also know that the cost may be more than monetary. Allergic reactions may occur when using medications that are not properly prescribed. Ill-fitting leg or back braces, or equipment that is not specifically intended for the pain experienced by the member, could do more harm than good.

This problem is prevalent throughout the country, so all of our members should be aware. Billions of unsolicited telemarketing calls are made each year, many of which are promoting health care services. Calls often spoof local phone numbers or numbers that appear familiar to trick the recipient into accepting the call.

How can you help protect your patients?

While the ultimate purpose of these telemarketing calls is to sell these items, the immediate goal of the person or company placing the call is to obtain valuable personally identifiable information (PII) from the member. Without this personal information, such as a social security number or insurance identification number, selling these devices and medications is much more difficult. Share this information with you patients to help them learn how to protect their PII.

You can help protect your patients and their personally identifiable information from scams by reminding them of the following:

- Don't fall prey to scams!
- Take a few moments to review your Explanation of Benefits (EOB) and the services listed.

When receiving robotic (robo) or telemarketing calls:

- Simply hang up the phone.
- Beware of threatening or urgent language used by the caller.
- Do not provide any personally identifiable information such as your social security number or insurance identification number. The caller may imply that they have your information and ask you to provide it to confirm that they have the correct information. Do not provide the information or confirm it if they do happen to have any identification information.

When receiving emails:

- Do not open email attachments you weren't expecting.
- Check for spelling mistakes and poor grammar.
- Do not click on the links you are sent. You can type the link into a new browser.
- Online scams can come from anywhere. Take a few moments to review your EOB and confirm that you received the services listed on the EOB.

Additional ways to protect yourself:

- Shred or destroy obsolete documents that contain medical claims information or EOBs.
- Do not use social media to share medical treatment information.

How to report when you receive what you suspect is a scam call or email:

- File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission at: <https://ftc.gov/complaint> or call 877-FTC-HELP.

Members may contact their plan's Member Services department.

ABSCRNU-0086-19

URL: <https://providernews.anthem.com/connecticut/article/help-protect-your-patients-by-providing-medical-id-protection-best-practices-2>

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January 2020 Anthem Connecticut Provider News, January 2020 Anthem Maine Provider News, January 2020 Anthem New Hampshire Provider News

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