

Fraud Alert: \$250 Medicare Part D Rebate Checks

According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), The Affordable Care Act, the historic health care reform law enacted earlier this year, accomplishes several things and implements numerous changes to the Medicare program. For seniors who participate in Medicare Part D, the law aims to provide some immediate relief from the coverage gap that exists in the program via a **\$250 rebate check**.

CMS explains that the coverage gap, a so-called “**donut hole**,” represents the difference of the initial coverage limit and the catastrophic coverage threshold. Once a Medicare beneficiary surpasses the prescription drug coverage limit, he or she becomes financially responsible for the entire cost of prescription drugs until the expense reaches the catastrophic coverage threshold.

Beginning June 10, seniors who entered the Medicare Part D donut hole in the first quarter of 2010 started receiving help in shouldering their prescription drug costs in the form of a tax-free, one time rebate check for \$250. Seniors who entered the donut hole after March 30 will receive their checks later in the year.

As with any program involving government payments, the Government is concerned about the potential for scams and fraud and wants to alert seniors. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Administration on Aging and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services are also aware of the potential for fraud and have launched a national education effort to provide seniors with the information they need to protect themselves

“Since early April, we have learned of seniors across the country who are being asked for personal information to help them get a rebate check,” said CMS Acting Administrator Marilyn Tavenner. “Beneficiaries who reach the donut hole will get a check mailed to the same address Medicare uses to send them information now without doing anything special. **Seniors should be on the look-out for scams where people they don’t know ask them for their personal information in order to get their checks. This is not how the process will work.** Checks will come directly to beneficiaries who qualify for this benefit under the Affordable Care Act. Seniors or family members should contact us at 1-800-MEDICARE to report any of these types of calls or go to www.stopmedicarefraud.gov to learn more about efforts to fight scams like these.”

The following is some key information about how the rebate check program works and how seniors can protect themselves:

- Rebate checks will be mailed directly and automatically to beneficiaries who qualify for this benefit under the Affordable Care Act.
- Rebate checks will be mailed to the same beneficiary address that Medicare uses to send other Medicare information to that person.
- Seniors should be wary if contacted by someone they don’t know and asked to provide personal information in order to receive their rebate check.
- Seniors or their family members are encouraged to contact Medicare at 1-800-MEDICARE to report suspected scams.
- Visit the Stop Medicare Fraud website (www.stopmedicarefraud.gov) to learn more about the government-sponsored fraud awareness campaign described above as well as other efforts underway to protect the Medicare program and the seniors it serves.

If you suspect, have been a victim, or have received suspicious calls, contact 1-800-MEDICARE right away.