

# STAY INFORMED, STAY PROTECTED

## *Recognizing and Preventing Hospice Fraud*

You may be familiar with hospice - an end-of-life service that centers quality of life, dignity, and comfort when curative treatments are no longer effective. What you may not know is that, unfortunately, there are bad actors who take advantage of hospice benefits.

***Being informed is the first step to protecting yourself and your community from these scams.***



## **HOW HOSPICE FRAUD HAPPENS**

Hospice fraud occurs when Medicare is falsely billed for any level of hospice care or service.

Fraudulent individuals may approach you with offers of free items such as TVs, recliners, groceries, gift cards, cash - in reality, they are taking advantage of your Medicare benefits and fraudulently enrolling you in hospice.

It is against the law for hospice providers to persuade you into signing up for hospice or palliative care services by giving you free items. Never accept gifts in return for hospice services and be wary of “too-good-to-be-true” offers. You should not be incentivized to sign up for services in exchange for some kind of gift.

It is important to remember: the Medicare and MediCal hospice benefit is NOT a scam—scammers are!

## ***What You Should Know About Hospice***

**Hospice is specialized care** for individuals with a terminal diagnosis with six months or less to live. It is a specific type of palliative care focused on providing comfort and support - physical, emotional, social, and spiritual - during the final stages of life.

**Typically delivered at home,** hospice follows a family-centered approach aimed at keeping the individual as comfortable as possible, surrounded by loved ones.

**To begin hospice care,** your primary care physician and the hospice physician will confirm eligibility and determine if you are ready for hospice care. When you enroll in hospice care, you must sign a statement choosing hospice care instead of other Medicare-covered treatments for your terminal illness and related conditions.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

If you knowingly or unknowingly sign up for hospice, all your existing Medicare and/or Medi-Cal benefits are turned off. If you suddenly cannot get your medications, are unable to receive a needed treatment or notice other unplanned changes in your coverage or care, you may be a victim of fraud.

## STAY PROTECTED

*If something feels unclear, uncomfortable, or too good to be true—ask. Asking questions doesn't mean you're being difficult—it means you're being proactive and cautious. Here are some questions you can ask to protect your care and coverage:*

- Was this hospice recommendation made by my primary care physician?
- Will signing up for hospice affect my current treatments or medications?
- Can you explain what services hospice will provide?
- Why are you offering incentives, such as housekeeping - is that part of hospice care?
- Can I see everything in writing before I agree or sign anything?
- What agency are you with? I want to verify your credentials with my doctor.
- If something still feels questionable or unclear, contact a credible organization (listed below) for assistance.



## GUARD YOUR MEDICARE CARD

Don't share your Medicare number with anyone you don't know. This includes people who contact you by telephone, email or in person. Protect your Medicare card the same way you would a credit card.

## TAKE ACTION

*If you notice sudden changes in your care or coverage, or if you suspect you've been enrolled in hospice without consent, act quickly.*

- Call your provider to verify you have not been fraudulently enrolled.
- Check your Medicare statements.
- Contact a trusted organization (listed below) for help reviewing your situation.



**Remember:  
asking questions  
doesn't mean  
you're being  
difficult—  
it means you're  
being proactive  
and cautious.**

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## CONNECT WITH THE RESOURCES BELOW

*If you have questions or would like consultation on end-of-life care, contact California Hospice and Palliative Care Association at **916-925-3770** or visit **CalHospice.org***



*If you or a loved one need guidance and resources for Advanced Care Planning and end-of-life matters, contact the Chinese American Coalition for Compassionate Care at **866-661-5687** or visit **caccc-usa.org***



*If you think you or someone you know has been scammed by a hospice provider, contact the California Senior Medicare Patrol at **855-613-7080** or visit **CaliforniaSMP.org***

