

## **SENIORS BEWARE!**

According to the Iowa Insurance Division, scams related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) are rapidly increasing as the public health emergency continues. Scammers are targeting older adults and those with serious long-term health conditions who appear to have a higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19. Fraudsters are attempting to bill Medicare for fake or sham tests and "treatments" related to the coronavirus and are targeting individuals to illegally obtain money or Medicare numbers.

### ***These COVID-related scams are active in Iowa as of March 25, 2020:***

#### Social Security Benefits Suspension Scam

The Social Security Office of the Inspector General has received reports that Social Security beneficiaries have received letters through the U.S. Mail stating their payments will be suspended or discontinued unless they call a phone number referenced in the letter. Scammers may then mislead beneficiaries into providing personal information or payment via retail gift cards, wire transfers, internet currency, or by mailing cash, to maintain regular benefit payments during this period of COVID-19 office closures. Social Security will not suspend or decrease Social Security benefit payments or Supplemental Security Income payments due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Any communication people receive that says SSA will reduce payments or benefits is a scam, whether you receive it by letter, text, email, or phone call.

Social Security will never:

- Threaten you with benefit suspension, arrest, or other legal action unless you pay a fine or fee;
- Promise a benefit increase or other assistance in exchange for payment;
- Require payment by retail gift card, cash wire transfer, internet currency, or prepaid debit card;
- Demand secrecy from you in handling a Social Security-related problem; or
- Send officials letter or reports containing personally identifiable information via mail.

*Continued . . .*

### Total Care Meal Scam

We have received word that some Iowa Total Care members may be receiving a text message asking them to click on a link to sign up for meals – this is a SCAM. Please alert them not to click on the link. Here is what the message says: “Iowa Total Care is going to be providing two meals per household member who is insured by Iowa Total Care. Clients should ignore this text, there are no free meals.

### CMS Providing Test Kits Scare

Several Medicare beneficiaries in Benton County have received calls from a person stating they are with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The callers report that because of the person's history with medication they are eligible for Coronavirus testing and they want to come to their home to drop off the test kit. Beware, these calls are a scam. CMS is not calling people to offer to come to their house to provide a test kit.