



## Who We Are

Attorney General  
Tom Miller  
Office Directory

## What We Do

Protecting Consumers  
Fighting Crime  
Helping Victims of  
Crime  
Working for Farmers  
Protecting the  
Environment  
Raising Child Support  
Awareness  
Representing State  
Government  
Issuing Attorney  
General Opinions  
Enforcing Tobacco Laws  
Protecting Utility  
Customers

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## Consumer Advisory Bulletin-May 2004

**Medicare Rx Drug Discount Cards: Check 'em out -- but Beware of Scams**

The Federal Medicare program has approved certain prescription drug discount cards that may help some people reduce their drug costs starting in June. Cards cost up to \$30 and may be purchased in May. There should be a lot of information reported about the program, but it may be confusing -- and that often is where we see con-artists try to take advantage of victims. We already have reports of con-artists using deception and confusion about the new program, attempting to commit identity theft and cheat people.

**"Do's and Don'ts" on Medicare prescription drug discount cards:**

- **DO look into it.** Medicare-approved drug discount cards are completely voluntary and are for people on Medicare. Medicare officials estimate people may save 10% to 15% on their total drug costs, and it has approved 28 private "sponsors" to provide the drug discount cards. (The program also offers a credit up to \$600 per year for low-income persons -- persons whose 2004 income is under \$12,569 single, or \$16,862 married. This federal subsidy waives the \$30 card enrollment fee and can pay 90% to 95% of drug costs up to \$600 per year in 2004 and 2005.)
- **DO "shop" for the card that makes the most sense for you.** People only can get one Medicare-approved card, so they will want to choose the one with the best prices for the drugs they use and the best choice of pharmacies. Contact Iowa's "SHIIP" or Senior Health Insurance Information Program for free, one-to-one advice on what card will work best for you. (Go to [www.shiip.state.ia.us](http://www.shiip.state.ia.us). Call 1-800-351-4664, or TTY 800-735-2942.) The SHIIP Program, part of the Iowa Insurance Div., has very good information about the card program, and there are SHIIP counselors across the state. You can also go to [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), or call 1-800-MEDICARE.
- **DON'T give your Social Security, Medicare, credit card, or bank account numbers to anyone who calls or stops at your door to sell the cards.** Some con-artists are using confusion about the program to steal identities and cheat victims. Legitimate information will come by mail -- not by phone or door-to-door. Watch for the official logo: "Medicare-Approved." Don't pay large sums in advance (the maximum cost for a card is \$30.) Contact Iowa's SHIIP Program or Medicare to be sure a card covers the drugs you take and your pharmacist accepts the card.

For more information on this topic, go to [www.iowaAttorneyGeneral.org](http://www.iowaAttorneyGeneral.org) or contact SHIIP. To file a complaint, contact the A.G.'s Consumer Protection Division, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. You also may call 515-281-5926 or go to the A.G. web site.

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