Wisconsin SMP

SCAM SPOTLIGHT

January 2026

Not Every Ring Is a Friend!

Think back to a time when the telephone was a family's main connection to the outside world. Back then, having a phone meant staying connected to family and having help in an emergency.

Today, that has changed. It is estimated that about 95 percent of the calls are unwanted — sales pitches, donation requests, or scams. What was once a lifeline has become a tool for marketers and criminals. Scammers often target seniors because they want access to personal information, money, or Medicare benefits.

So what can you do? First, let your answering machine or voicemail screen your calls. **ONLY** answer when you recognize the caller. It also helps to plan ahead and prepare a simple response.

Here are a few suggestions:

- If the caller claims to represent a charity, ask them to send information in writing and state that you do not donate over the phone.
- If someone is selling something, request written information. If they say it's a limited-time offer, explain that you don't make decisions during phone calls.
- Ask for the caller's name, company name, and a callback number, and tell them you will verify the offer before responding.

Most importantly, watch for these red flags:

- Requests for credit card or bank information
- Requests for personal information such as Medicare or Social Security numbers
- Pressure to act immediately
- Calls where the caller claims to know information about you but asks you to confirm it

If you hear any of these warning signs, hang up immediately.

Report any suspected fraud or suspicious activity to the Wisconsin Senior Medicare Patrol. Call 888-818-2611 to report fraudulent activity.

For more information, visit www.smpwi.org.

SMP
Senior Medicare Patrol
Preventing Medicare Fraud

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