



# Tompkins County Office for the Aging

320 N. Tioga Street  
Ithaca, NY 14850-4207  
607-274-5482  
FAX 607-274-5495

## National Consumer Protection

There's a new scam every day. A Census worker needs your Social Security number to verify your identity. A "charity" needs your bank account number to provide health care to Haitian children. An e-mail needs you to click on a link for a "free" trial offer.

Here are some general tips to avoid scams:

1. Don't give out your Social Security, Medicare and bank account numbers over the telephone. They can be used against you. So can information such as the names of your children or grandchildren.
2. Beware of callers who say they're from an organization such as Medicare and they need to know your Medicare number. If they truly were from Medicare, they wouldn't need to ask. Nor would they call or visit your home unless you called them first.
3. Never purchase items online from a website that you've found from an e-mail link. It could be a fraudulent site. If you know the name of an organization you want to do business with, go to the website on your own. Only buy from secure websites -- those with "https" as part of their web addresses.
4. If a charity calls wanting a donation and you'd like to donate, hang up, look up the name of the charity and call yourself. The caller might not have been from the organization at all, or might have been a middleman who funnels little of the donation to the charity.

National Consumer Protection week is a coordinated consumer education campaign. For more information, go to <http://consumer.gov/ncpw/>.

The National SMP website is [www.smpresource.org](http://www.smpresource.org)  
<<http://www.smpresource.org/>>

The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) program, funded by the U.S. Administration

on Aging, educates and empowers seniors to prevent, identify and report health care fraud and abuse. If you're an older American or the family member, caregiver or friend of one, the SMP can help. SMP in New York State is part of the county Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP).

Contact the HIICAP program at the Tompkins County Office for the Aging (607)274-5482 or Lifelong (607)273-1511 if you have questions about health insurance issues including fraud and abuse.