

NEWS FROM SCDCA

South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONSUMER ALERT: PRESCRIPTION DRUG CARDS: DIAGNOSE THE FINE PRINT!

As prescription drug costs rise, many consumers, especially seniors, are considering using Prescription Drug Discount Cards. Often advertised as accessible, cost-effective and easy, fraudulent and misleading cards can do more harm than good. The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs handles the complaints regarding these cards. But as with illness, prevention is the best prescription when it comes to prescription drug card fraud.

Prescription Drug Discount Cards must meet certain criteria:

- ✓ The card must clearly state that it is NOT insurance.
- ✓ Card suppliers must provide documentation to SCDCA that discounts are specifically authorized and that the card supplier has a separate contract with *each* pharmacy or pharmacy chain that will honor the cards.
- ✓ Discounts cannot be deceptive, misleading, or fraudulent.

Consumers must take extra cautions with Medicare Approved Discount Drug Cards, as all cards—and thus benefits – are different. Consumers should beware of fraudulent look-alike cards or *(Continued)*

About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina Consumers. Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education. For more information, visit www.state.sc.us/consumer.

door-to- door and telephone sales (Medicare-approved discount drug card providers cannot advertise or sell by phone or door-to-door). Beware of extra charges and fees; Medicare-approved cards have a maximum fee of \$35 per year. Some prescription drug discount cards have been approved for use by Medicare. Medicare can verify all approved Discount Drug Card carriers and distributors. Call Medicare at 1.800.633.4227 (TTY: 1-877-486-2048) or log on to www.medicare.gov to verify any advertised Medicare approval.

As with any card or special offer, consumers should never take any claims or promises at face value. It is necessary to read and understand ALL of the terms of the card – and the subsequent discounts – if you want to choose the right card for your needs. Here are some questions to consider when choosing a card:

- ✓ What types of health care and medication are covered by this plan?
- ✓ Are my family members covered?
- ✓ Will local pharmacies accept this card? If so, which ones?
- ✓ How much does this card plan cost? How much am I really saving by using this card plan?
- ✓ Are there any hidden fees?
- ✓ If my medication changes, will this card cover the new medication?
- ✓ Am I giving up my personal and/or medical information?
- ✓ Will a pre-existing condition affect my enrollment?
- ✓ Are the offered discounts exaggerated?

Always remember to read **ALL** the card information, and to never give out your checking, banking account, credit card, or personal information to unfamiliar people – even those claiming to be with a Prescription Drug Discount Card company.

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