



# SCAM ALERT

January 2021

**Avoid COVID-19 VACCINE SCAMS**

## **PROTECT YOURSELF—AVOID COVID-19 VACCINE SCAMS**

As COVID-19 vaccine distribution begins, the AR SMP shares warnings from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), about several emerging fraud schemes related to COVID-19 vaccines

### **What You Should Know:**

Scammers are using the public's interest in the COVID-19 vaccines to obtain personal information and money through various schemes. Here are tips and **warning signs** of potential COVID-19 vaccine-related fraud/scams:

- Advertisements or offers for early access to a vaccine upon payment of a deposit or fee.
- Requests asking you to pay to put your name on a COVID-19 vaccine waiting list.
- Offers to undergo additional medical testing or procedures when obtaining a vaccine.
- Marketers offering to sell and/or ship doses of a vaccine, domestically or internationally, in exchange for payment of a deposit or fee.
- Unsolicited emails, telephone calls, or social media contact from someone claiming to be from a medical office, insurance company, or COVID-19 vaccine center requesting personal information to determine eligibility to obtain the vaccine.
- Individuals contacting you in person, by phone, or by email stating the government requires you to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

### **TIPS:**

- You cannot pay to get your name on a vaccine waiting list or to get the vaccine faster.
- Medicare recipients should not pay anything out of pocket to get the vaccine.
- No one from the health department will contact you.
- Consult the AR Department of Health website for up-to-date information about authorized vaccine distribution channels and only obtaining a vaccine through such channels:
  - ⇒ <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/covid-19-vaccine-plan>
  - ⇒ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>
- Consult your primary care physician before undergoing any vaccination.
- No one will call asking for Medicare number, Social Security number or banking information to sign you up for a vaccine. Don't share your personal or health information with anyone who contacts you about the vaccine.
- Check your medical bills and Medicare Summary Notices (MSNs) and Explanation of Benefits (EOBs) for suspicious claims. Report any errors to your health insurance provider or call the AR SMP—866-726-2916.

### **How to Respond:**

If you believe you have been the victim of a COVID-19 fraud, immediately report it to the FBI ([ic3.gov](https://ic3.gov), [tips.fbi.gov](https://tips.fbi.gov), or call 1-800-CALL-FBI) or HHS OIG ([tips.hhs.gov](https://tips.hhs.gov) or call 1-800-HHS-TIPS).

**REPORT all scams to the Arkansas SMP—866-726-2916**