

*The Senior Medicare Patrol is.....*

# LOOKING OUT FOR YOU

DATE: 5/1/15

2015-4

SUBJECT: **“Free Phone”: Is it for real?**

That’s what a person with Medicaid asked the Senior Medicare Patrol.

- A stranger came up to her at a bus stop and offered her a free phone. All she had to do was show her Medicaid card. She did.
- Two weeks passed and no phone came. She tried to go to the store named on the business card the stranger gave her, but it was always closed when she went by.
- She was afraid she had been scammed. Maybe the stranger had stolen her Medicaid number and she wouldn’t be able to get medical services anymore.

In Honolulu, we see people on the street, offering free phones to bus riders who look like they might have Medicaid, SSI, Section 8, or other government assistance. We also notice tents or “pop-up” stores around town with banners advertising “FREE PHONE.” **Are they for real?**

There is an actual government program called **Lifeline** that gives low-income people a discount on phone service so they can connect to jobs, keep in contact with family, and call for help in emergencies --like most people can.

- **Only authorized Lifeline Program providers can sign you up.** They have to make sure you meet the income limit. And they can sign you up only once—one discount for one landline or wireless phone service per household.
- Offering free phones is a way to get people to sign up. The more people they sign up, the more they get reimbursed by the Lifeline Program fund. Here’s where fraud comes in. In 2013, the Federal Communications Commission penalized four Lifeline Program providers for asking for payment for thousands of people who had more than one Lifeline subscription from the same provider. They had to pay back over \$50 million dollars they weren’t supposed to get.



## WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

- Think twice when anyone is offering something for free. For Lifeline, the phone might be free, but find out how much you will have to pay for the phone service.
- Don’t give out your personal information to anyone until you know they are “for real.”
- If you see Lifeline fraud happening, call SMP Hawaii at 1-800-296-9422, and we will help you make a report.

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## How to get information about Lifeline

For official, government information about Lifeline from the Federal Communications Commission, call toll free: 1-888-641-8722 or 1-888-225-5322.

Below are Hawaii's Lifeline Program providers and their phone numbers , as shown on the Universal Service Administration Company (USAC) website on 5/4/15 at

[www.lifelinesupport.org/ls/companies/companies.aspx](http://www.lifelinesupport.org/ls/companies/companies.aspx)

Name	Phone/Address	Service Type
Mobi PCS	808-723-1111	Wireless
Sprint Nextel	(Does not participate according to store manager)	Wireless
T-Mobile	1-800-866-2453	Wireless
Pa Makani		Wireless
Safelink Wireless	1-800-723-3546	Wireless
Blue Jay Wireless	1-855-425-8529	Wireless
Total Call Mobile, Inc.	1-800-550-5266	Wireless
Budget Mobile	1-888-777-4007	Wireless
Hawaiian Telcom, Inc.	808-643-3456	Home Phone
Sandwich Isles Communications, Inc.	1-888-955-7274	Home Phone