

Subject: Personal Care Services Investigative Advisory – Audio News Release

Contact: Tesia Williams, Director of Media Communications
Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
media@oig.hhs.gov
202-708-9855

(David Ceron – Special Agent for HHS-OIG) 2:08

The Inspector General The investigative advisory from our Office of Investigations provides CMS with examples of the fraud, abuse, and neglect our Federal investigators have seen in the Medicaid Personal Care Services or “PCS” program. OIG’s mission includes protecting the health and welfare of program beneficiaries. In these cases we found fraudsters who exploited policy vulnerabilities in the PCS program to bill for services that they never provided, diverting needed resources. But of greater concern are the instances we found of abuse or neglect by PCS attendants that resulted in deaths, hospitalizations, and less severe degrees of patient harm. PCS is an important and growing benefit that is intended to allow the elderly and individuals with disabilities or other conditions to remain in their homes and maintain a basic quality of life. OIG has continued to recommend that CMS require State Medicaid programs to establish consistent and effective safeguards that can help prevent or detect the serious problems OIG investigators have seen. These safeguards include establishing minimum Federal qualifications and screening standards for PCS workers, including background checks; requiring States to enroll or register all PCS attendants and assign them unique numbers if they don’t already do so; and requiring that claims include the identity of the PCS attendant and the dates of service. Without implementing these recommendations, OIG believes the delivery of PCS will remain vulnerable to fraud and the beneficiaries that the program serves will remain in danger of receiving substandard care. In absence of these Federal requirements, there are some steps beneficiaries or their loved ones can take to help ensure appropriate and safe care is delivered. For example, if the attendant works for a provider agency, beneficiaries or their families can ask the agency about the qualifications they require and the background checks they perform. Beneficiaries can also establish a set schedule for when services are to be provided to include arrival and departure times and spot check to make sure the attendants are providing services on those dates and times. Ultimately, OIG recognizes a need for CMS to increase PCS program integrity to better protect people who receive this important benefit.