

Authorities warn elderly about COVID-19 scams

By **Andrew Stanton and Adam Sennott** Globe Correspondent, Updated March 24, 2020, 9:23 p.m.

Authorities across Massachusetts are warning residents about potential scams involving fraudulent COVID-19 tests.

Elderly individuals are being advised to beware of scammers offering testing in exchange for money, a person's medicaid number, or access to their home, the Massachusetts Senior Medicare Patrol program and the North Shore Elder Services said in a joint press release.

There have been reports of teams in white coats going door-to-door offering fake virus testing, according to the statement. Testing can only be ordered by a physician.

People have also received calls from people pretending to be nurses who say they can offer test results after they receive a credit card number, Lucilia Prates-Ramos, the statewide director of the Massachusetts Senior Medicare Patrol program, said in the release.

In both cases, they are trying to steal their victim's identity. "Sadly, the scams around coronavirus testing are spreading almost as fast as the virus itself," Prates-Ramos said.

If an individual is offered COVID-19 testing by someone who is not their physician they are advised to call the police immediately and keep a record of the person's name and the date of the encounter, the release said.

“If someone knocks at your door to offer medical testing, do not let them in,” Prates-Ramos said. “Instead, call the police immediately. Remember: Never give your Medicare number to someone you don’t know.”

Melrose officials also issued a warning to residents about scams where people solicit donations or sell products claiming to cure, prevent, or detect the virus.

People should not accept COVID-19 testing from door-to-door solicitors, people at the grocery store, through the mail, or from anyone who calls and requests financial information in return for a test, Melrose Police Chief Michael L. Lyle said in a statement Monday.

“It is important to properly research offers, pay attention to official information regarding COVID-19 and tell authorities of any suspicious activity you encounter,” Lyle said in the statement. “It’s not uncommon to see scammers try to take advantage of people during uncertain times and we encourage residents to remain vigilant.”