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### [AG investigating MedGuard plan: The Real Deal 6-29-09](#)

Syracuse (WSYR-TV) -- The New York State Attorney General's Office is investigating a membership program offered by eight volunteer ambulance corps in Onondaga County called MedGuard. For an annual fee, it's supposed to cover any costs your insurance company won't. But the Attorney General's office says customers may be paying for a service they don't need.

For the 8 volunteer ambulance corps in Onondaga County, every fundraising dollar is desperately needed. That's why they got together to start a program called MedGuard, years ago.

If you pay them \$45 a year, they'll pay for any costs associated with a transport, not covered by insurance, including the co-pay.

The submissions equate to a little more than a quarter of a million dollars for the entire group. But the Attorney General recently told them to stop selling their service, which means they won't get any of that money at all.

The Attorney General told them to stop selling, for the following the reasons:

- 1) Technically, they believe these plans are a form of insurance, which the group isn't licensed to sell.
- 2) Under the law, co-pays can't be waived.
- 3) Ambulance companies have to take an "agreed to" payment from your insurance company,

Instead of sending out the MedGuard applications which they would get back in the mail about this time of year, the ambulance corps have been forced to send letters explaining why they can no longer offer the program, and now they're looking for ways to make up what they're losing.

Now they're looking for ways to make up for what they're losing. "We're back to being forced to beg for money in order to keep our doors open," says a member of EAVES, or East Area Volunteer Ambulance Service.

At MedGuard's inception back in 1996, they did go to NYS Insurance Department and have them look over the



plan. At the time, the state did not have a problem with it but since then, they've issued further legal opinions that the plan is a form of insurance. The MedGuard program has been halted while the ambulance companies work with their attorney and the AG's office.

The AG's office has also asked Rural Metro to stop selling a similar program called "Spirit", which costs \$50 per year. They are sending a letter to all members letting them know the program has been suspended.