



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Catherine Cortez Masto, *Attorney General*
Randal R. Munn, *Assistant Attorney General*
Keith Munro, *Chief of Staff*

100 N. Carson Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701-4717
Telephone - (775) 684-1100
Fax - (775) 684-1108
Web - <http://ag.state.nv.us>

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CONTACT: Tim Terry (775) 684-1191
Nicole Moon (702) 486-3379
(775) 230-3360 (cell)
njmoon@ag.state.nv.us

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER HEALTHCARE WORKERS SENTENCED FOR MEDICAID FRAUD

Las Vegas – Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto announced today that Las Vegas Maria Barraza, age 59, was sentenced for felony level Medicaid Fraud-Submitting False Claims. The charge carried a maximum 4 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. District Court Judge David T. Wall sentenced her to 12 to 30 months in jail, suspended; payment of \$21,000 in restitution, penalties, and costs; serve 3 years probation plus 120 hours of community service.

Earlier, on 12/20/07, Lizbeth Ortiz, age 20, daughter of Barraza, pled guilty to misdemeanor Medicaid Fraud-Submitting False Claims. Justice Court Judge William Jansen sentenced her to 90 days in jail, suspended; 2 years informal probation, payment of \$21,000 in restitution, penalties, and costs plus 60 hours of community service. Both Barraza and Ortiz will have joint and severable liability for payment of the \$21,000. These cases were investigated and prosecuted by the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU).

MFCU Director, Tim Terry, said the investigation began in 2006 after information was obtained that Ortiz was not providing personal home care services to Medicaid recipients but claims were being submitted to Medicaid as if the services were performed. Medicaid's personal care aid program is designed to keep people living independently in their own homes by providing basic services, including bathing, dressing, cleaning and meal preparation. The investigation developed information that both Ortiz and Barraza were not at patient's homes for the time periods they claimed to be providing services. Ortiz also had a full time job at another location.

Attorney General Cortez Masto said "While it is unfortunate that a mother would risk the freedom of her daughter to obtain money fraudulently; it is just as unfortunate that patients were deprived of the home care they needed."

The Nevada Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit investigates and prosecutes instances of financial fraud by those providing healthcare services or goods to Medicaid patients. The unit also investigates and prosecutes elder abuse or neglect. Anyone wishing to report suspicions regarding any of these concerns may contact the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit in Carson City (775) 684-1191 or in Las Vegas (702) 486-3187. Medicaid fraud information can also be found on the Attorney General's web site: <http://ag.state.nv.us>