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For Immediate Release
Thursday May 27, 2010

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FORMER MEDICAL BILLING SERVICES EMPLOYEE SENTENCED FOR EMBEZZLING FROM MEDICAL PROVIDERS

Lake Charles, Louisiana. . .A former account manager for Medical Provider Services (MPS), a Lake Charles company that provides billing services for physicians and other medical providers, was sentenced to 37 months in federal prison for embezzling hundreds of thousands of dollars from medical providers' accounts, Acting United States Attorney William J. Flanagan announced today. Nikkie A. LaFleur, 46, of Lake Charles, La., was also ordered to pay \$621,737.00 in restitution. The sentence was imposed today by United States District Judge Patricia Minaldi.

LaFleur pleaded guilty in March 2010 to three counts of health care fraud. According to court documents, LaFleur's duties at MPS included billing insurance companies for services provided by physicians and other health care providers, and posting reimbursement payments received from the insurance companies to the medical providers' accounts. Beginning in June 2005 and continuing through September 2007, LaFleur altered MPS records to reflect that certain treatments and medications were ordered by the physicians when in fact such treatments and medications were neither ordered nor performed. After altering the records, the defendant then fraudulently billed the patients' insurance companies to obtain payments, which LaFleur then deposited into her personal checking account after forging their endorsements. LaFleur personally received \$646,685 from these fraudulent checks.

LaFleur also fraudulently billed both Medicare and Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) as part of her scheme, but those entities typically provide reimbursement directly to providers via electronic payments. LaFleur was unable to obtain these funds for her personal use, and the doctors did not even realize this was occurring until her criminal activities were discovered.

As part of the criminal prosecution, the United States is seeking to forfeit certain assets belonging to LaFleur which were purchased with proceeds for the fraud, including two jet skis, a motorboat, a tandem trailer, boat trailer, and 31 foot travel trailer, as well as cash.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Lake Charles Resident Agency, and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kelly P. Uebinger.

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