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HEALTHCARE WORKER AND RECIPIENT SENTENCED FOR MEDICAID FRAUD

Reno, NV: – Steven Coward, age 29, and Leslie Riggs, age 53, who pled guilty to a gross misdemeanor offense of Intentional Failure to Maintain Adequate Records, were each sentenced for Medicaid Fraud. District Court Judge Steven Elliot sentenced each to 12 months in jail, suspended, payment of \$42,000.00 in restitution, penalties, and costs, and 3 years probation. Coward was additionally sentenced to perform 80 hours of community service. The case was investigated and prosecuted by the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU).

"Prosecution of these crimes helps ensure the integrity of Medicaid and returns restitution money that can be used by those in need of services," Attorney General Cortez Masto said.

The investigation began in 2007 after the MFCU obtained information that Coward was not providing personal care services to Riggs, who is his aunt and a Medicaid recipient. With Riggs' encouragement and assistance, Coward submitted claims to Medicaid and received payment as if he had actually provided services to Riggs.

Medicaid has a personal care aid program to keep people living independently in their own homes by providing basic services, including bathing, dressing, house cleaning and meal preparation. Medicaid contracts with home care companies that in turn employ individuals to provide the actual day-to-day care. The investigation developed information that Coward indeed failed to provide care services for Riggs, that Riggs assisted Coward by asserting that services were provided to her by Coward and that Coward submitted claims through his employing agency and received payment of Medicaid funds as if he had actually performed the services.

The Nevada Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit investigates and prosecutes instances of elder abuse or neglect. The unit also investigates and prosecutes financial fraud by those providing healthcare services or goods to Medicaid patients. 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>