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Eastern District of California

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SECOND STOCKTON WOMAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR EMBEZZLING FROM SAN JOAQUIN CHILD CARE REFERRAL AGENCY

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown and San Joaquin County District Attorney James P. Willett announced today that LAPHONE VONGKEO, 32, of Stockton, was sentenced by United States District Judge Frank C. Damrell, Jr., to 30 months in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release. She was also ordered to pay \$283,393.22 in restitution. The defendant pleaded guilty on July 13, 2009, to embezzling the funds from the Family Resource and Referral Center, an organization that receives funds from the San Joaquin County Human Services Agency to pay child care providers for services rendered to qualifying parents on public assistance. VONGKEO worked there as a senior Payment Provider Analyst.

This case was the product of a joint investigation by the FBI and the San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Benjamin B. Wagner, who prosecuted the case, VONGKEO admitted in her guilty plea that from November 2004 through July 2007, she used her position at the Family Resource and Referral Center to cause the Center to issue 88 checks totaling over \$283,000 to two relatives of hers who were not entitled to receive those checks. She then split the proceeds of the scheme with them.

In sentencing the defendant, Judge Damrell told her that she had committed "a very serious crime," which represented a "breach of the public trust" by embezzling funds entrusted to her as a public employee, which funds had been intended to assist working families.

Most of the checks were issued to MARY THONGDEE, 26, also of Stockton, who was also charged in the case. THONGDEE previously pleaded guilty to participating in the embezzlement scheme, and she was sentenced by Judge Damrell on April 27, 2009, to 18 months in prison, to be followed by three years of supervised release, and was also ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$253,360.87.