



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney Eastern District of Arkansas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 3, 2008

**CONTACT: Jane Duke
United States Attorney
501-340-2650**

PROVIDER OF SPEECH THERAPY SERVICES SENTENCED TO PRISON

Little Rock – Jane Duke, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, announced that Bridget Jones, age 31, of Little Rock, Arkansas was sentenced October 30 by the Honorable James M. Moody, United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas. Jones was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$63, 230.72 to the Arkansas Medicaid Program Trust Fund. Jones' prison sentence is to be followed by three years of supervised release.

In May 2008, Jones, the owner and operator of New Beginnings Therapy Services, Inc. (NBTS), pled guilty to one count of health care fraud. NBTS provided speech therapy to children and had entered into a contract with the Department of Human Services to participate in the Arkansas Medicaid Program. As a Medicaid provider NBTS was required to bill Medicaid for covered services only after the services had been provided and to keep all appropriate and necessary records. Medicaid regulations further required all therapy services be performed by a licensed and Medicaid-enrolled therapist. Since Jones was not a licensed therapist, she had to hire a licensed therapist to perform the actual services. An investigation revealed that Jones billed Medicaid for therapy services which were not provided by therapists employed by NBTS. She also billed Medicaid for services when she was ineligible to continue as a Medicaid provider because she had a prior conviction related to fraud in connection with another government benefit program. In Jones' prior case, she was convicted of theft of governmental funds from the Arkansas Department of Human Services related to fraudulent vouchers for child care services and was sentenced to three years probation.

Duke stated, "Despite the great degree of regulatory oversight, billing fraud within our government benefit programs remains a huge problem. We are committed to aggressively prosecuting those providers who abuse the system for their own financial gain." She added, "In this case, the conduct by Jones is especially egregious because she was previously convicted of

fraudulent billing related to a government benefit program.” Duke expressed appreciation for the thorough work of the Arkansas Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) in this case. “MFCU is a vital partner in combating Medicaid provider fraud,” Duke said. “The Department of Justice recognizes the importance of United States Attorney’s Offices pursuing Medicaid fraud hand-in-hand with state authorities, especially in states like Arkansas, where over 70% of the Medicaid program budget is funded with federal dollars.”

This case was investigated by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General and the Arkansas Medicaid Fraud Control Unit. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Laura Hoey.

#