

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

*United States Attorney
Laura E. Duffy*

Assistant U. S. Attorney George V. Manahan (619) 546-7927

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - March 6, 2012

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that Armando Garcia, the former owner and operator of California Legal Services in Pico Rivera, California, with offices in National City, California, was sentenced yesterday in federal court in San Diego by United States District Judge Michael M. Anello to serve 81 months in federal prison, followed by a three-year term of supervised release, based on his convictions for aggravated identity theft and conspiracy to commit mail fraud and aggravated identity theft. Garcia pled guilty to those charges in June 2011. Judge Anello ordered Garcia to return to court on May 7, 2012, when the court will determine the amount of restitution owed by Garcia.

Garcia's co-conspirator, Elizabeth Alcocer, pled guilty in August 2010, to mail fraud, aggravated identity theft, and conspiracy to commit mail fraud and aggravated identity theft. She is scheduled to be sentenced on March 19, 2012, before Judge Anello.

According to court records, Garcia formed California Legal Services in 2001. Garcia admitted in his plea agreement that he and Alcocer falsely told undocumented aliens that, for a fee, California Legal Services could lawfully obtain immigration documents allowing the aliens to legally reside and work in the United

States. Garcia further admitted that he and Alcocer prepared various immigration applications based upon fraudulent documents created by them, including counterfeit marriage certificates, birth certificates, and tax returns. California Legal Services successfully obtained immigration benefits based on fraudulent documents. In other cases, Garcia and Alcocer provided counterfeit letters to their victims, purportedly from the Government, in order to lull the victims into believing that legitimate applications had been filed on their behalf and that their cases were proceeding normally. Garcia and Alcocer did not disclose to their victims that the applications submitted on their behalf contained false information and were supported by fraudulent documents.

According to court documents, more than 150 victims have been identified, and those victims paid California Legal Services over \$1.2 million for fraudulent services. Additional victims are encouraged to contact Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations at (619) 550-5183.

This case is the product of an approximately two year-long investigation by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 10cr1642MMA

Armando Garcia
Elizabeth Alcocer

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Count 1: Title 18, United States Code, Section 371 - Conspiracy
Count 2: Title 18, United States Code, Section 1341 - Mail Fraud (Alcocer Only)
Count 8: Title 18, United States Code, Section 1028A(a)(1) - Aggravated Identity Theft

INVESTIGATING AGENCY

Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations