

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

SAN DIEGO PSYCHOLOGIST ADMITS FALSIFYING DISABILITY REPORTS IN \$1.5 MILLION DOLLAR FRAUD SCHEME

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - August 2, 2012

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that Roberto J. Velasquez, a San Diego area clinical psychologist, pled guilty today in federal court to two counts of immigration fraud and social security fraud in connection with a scheme to falsify medical certifications to the federal government. Velasquez's guilty plea was taken by Magistrate Judge William McCurine, Jr., and is subject to final acceptance by Chief District Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz.

According to court documents and admissions in open court, Velasquez was trained to diagnose and treat various mental ailments that could render an individual disabled, and was qualified to certify to the federal government when his patients had such disabilities and should therefore be entitled to Social

Security benefits or exemptions from immigration requirements. However, Velasquez admitted that he falsely certified that dozens of patients were disabled, when in fact, they were not. To further the fraud, Velasquez made up patient histories, fabricated test results, suggested symptoms and complaints that did not exist, intentionally underestimated patient scores on standardized tests, and lied about the length of time he had been seeing the patients.

In his plea agreement, Velasquez admitted that he falsified two different types of disability reports. First, Velasquez falsified Medical Certification for Disability Exception Forms (Forms N-648), which are used by the Department of Homeland Security during the naturalization process. Velasquez's false certifications allowed certain immigrants to avoid taking the English language and Civics portions of the U.S. citizenship exam. Based on the fraudulent N-648 forms, the Department of Homeland Security granted disability exemptions to at least 25 immigrants who were not actually disabled.

Velasquez also admitted that he submitted fraudulent medical reports to the Social Security Administration, falsely certifying that certain patients were eligible for disability benefits when he knew they were not. Beginning in 2006, and continuing up to the date of Velasquez's arrest in April 2012, the Social Security Administration paid out at least \$1.5 million in unwarranted disability benefits based on Velasquez's false certifications. Velasquez also admitted that approximately 33% of his patient files contained fabrications, false statements, and false certifications of disability.

This prosecution is a part of the United States Attorney's Health Care Fraud initiative, and was jointly investigated by the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement/Homeland Security Investigations, and the Office of Inspector General, Social Security Administration.

Velasquez is scheduled to be sentenced on October 10, 2012 at 10:00 a.m., before Chief District Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz

DEFENDANT**CRIMINAL CASE NO. 12cr1750-BTM**

Roberto J. Velasquez

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Count One - Title 18, United States Code, Section 1546 – False Statements in Immigration Documents
Maximum Penalties: 10 years of imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and a mandatory order of restitution to repay the fraudulently obtained proceeds of the scheme.

Count Two - Title 42, United States Code, Section 1383a(a)(2) - False Statements in Applications for SSI Disability Benefits
Maximum Penalties: 5 years of imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and a mandatory order of restitution to repay the fraudulently obtained proceeds of the scheme.

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations
Office of Inspector General, Social Security Administration