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LOGAN COUNTY WOMAN SENTENCED FOR STEALING FEDERAL BENEFITS

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Sherry D. Harrison, 59, of Holden, Logan County, West Virginia, was sentenced to five years probation by United States District Judge Thomas E. Johnston for the theft of government funds. Harrison admitted that in July 2003, she fraudulently signed and falsified documents which led to the payment of more than \$46,500 in federal Social Security benefits to her while acting as a representative payee on behalf of her stepdaughter. An investigation revealed that Harrison falsified numerous documents over a 7-year period which she received more than \$500 per month in federal benefits on behalf of a minor that she admitted was not in her custody. Harrison and her husband used the federal funds to pay their child's mother \$100 each month for child care in addition to \$54 in child support. Harrison further admitted that the money was used toward family vacations, paying her own bills including a house payment, groceries and utilities and the purchase of various personal items for the child.

The defendant was ordered to pay the full \$46,542 in restitution to the Social Security Administration. Harrison has paid back a portion of the amount, thus leaving \$45, 392 in outstanding restitution owed.

A joint investigation was conducted by the Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General and the United States Postal Inspection Service. Assistant United States Attorney Erik Goes handled the prosecution.

This case was prosecuted as part of the U.S. Attorney's Initiative to Combat Theft of Government Benefits launched in June 2008. The initiative is designed to protect public funds and to prosecute those who steal benefits from public programs or agencies such as the Railroad Retirement Board, U.S. Veterans Administration, Social Security Administration, and the Department of Labor.

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