



U. S. Department of Justice

Jason R. Coody
Acting United States Attorney
Northern District of Florida

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For more information, contact:
U.S. Attorney's Office,
Northern District of Florida
(850) 216-3829
USAFLN.Press.Office@usdoj.gov

**FLORIDA COUNSELING CENTER OWNER AND PROVIDER CONVICTED OF
MEDICAID FRAUD, CONSPIRACY, FALSE STATEMENTS, AND IDENTITY THEFT**

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA – Jason R. Coody, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida, today announced the convictions of Stephanie Lynn Fleming, 42, and Helen Elizabeth Storey, 37, both of Waldorf, Maryland, and both formerly of Tallahassee, Florida. Both defendants were found guilty of health care fraud conspiracy, health care fraud, and aggravated identity theft. Fleming was also found guilty of making false statements in connection to health care matters. The convictions came yesterday after a 3-day federal bench trial that involved testimony from more than 15 witnesses and over 125 exhibits introduced into evidence.

“These convictions demonstrate that the United States Attorney’s Office is committed to aggressively and diligently prosecuting those who commit healthcare fraud,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Coody. “The concerted and cooperative effort of our federal and state law enforcement partners was critical to bringing these defendants to justice. We will continue to work toward our common goals of protecting our community members and preserving the integrity of our federally-funded healthcare programs.”

Storey owned and operated North Florida Mental Health (NFMH), a Tallahassee-based counseling center, and employed Fleming as a licensed mental health counselor. Evidence presented in court showed that between April 15, 2016 and December 31, 2017, Storey and Fleming improperly obtained, or attempted to obtain, more than \$250,000 from Florida Medicaid by submitting fraudulent claims through NFMH.

“Convicted fraudsters Storey and Fleming fraudulently billed the Medicaid program for bogus claims. The pair ignored an exclusion from all federal health care programs, thus stealing from this taxpayer-funded safety net program that is designed to provide legitimate health services to vulnerable patients,” said Special Agent in Charge Omar Pérez Aybar. “Our investigators will continue to aggressively investigate such bad actors to hold them accountable and to send a warning to others tempted to loot from federal health care programs.”

Fleming, who provided psychotherapy, psychiatric diagnostic evaluations, and therapeutic behavioral services to patients of NFMH, agreed to a five-year debarment from participating in any state Medicaid program as a result of a 2016 felony conviction involving Medicaid fraud in the state of New Jersey. Evidence presented in court proved that Fleming falsely claimed on an application to become a Florida Medicaid provider that she had not been convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to, a felony. Additional evidence demonstrated that Storey knew of Fleming's conviction and debarment, and that Fleming was therefore ineligible to participate as a Florida Medicaid provider.

During the trial, evidence showed that Fleming caused to be submitted – and that Storey submitted – multiple fraudulent Medicare claims by means of aggravated identity theft. In doing so, some of the false Medicare claims reflected that another eligible and licensed NFMH therapist performed services that, in reality, were provided by Fleming during the period of time that she was under debarment from participation in any state Medicaid program. The court heard evidence of additional instances in which the names and personal identification information of NFMH patients, many of whom were children, were used to submit fictitious Medicare claims for services that were not performed at all.

“These convicted criminals defrauded the Florida Medicaid program out of approximately a quarter of a million dollars,” said Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody. “They fled to Maryland, but through great investigative work by my Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and collaboration with federal officials, they were brought back to Florida to answer for their crimes—and today were found guilty on a myriad of charges. I look forward to seeing this criminal duo sentenced.”

Both defendants face a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for conspiracy to commit health care fraud and 10 years in prison for each of the health care fraud convictions. They both also face 2 years in prison as a mandatory minimum sentence, consecutive to any other sentence imposed, for each count of aggravated identity theft. Fleming's conviction for making false statements in connection to health care matters carries a maximum sentence of 5 years in prison. Sentencing is scheduled for August 20, 2021, at 1:30 p.m. at the United States Courthouse in Tallahassee.

Assistant United States Attorney Justin M. Keen prosecuted the case, which was jointly investigated by the Department of Health and Human Services - Office of Inspector General and the Florida Attorney General Office's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](https://www.uscourts.gov/court-system/USDC-Northern-District-of-Florida) website. For more information about the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <http://www.justice.gov/usao/fln/index.html>.

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