



U.S. Department of Justice

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 22, 2023

Milwaukee Woman Indicted for Perpetrating a \$2.3 Million Health Care Fraud

Gregory J. Haanstad, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, announced that on June 21, 2023, a federal grand jury indicted Markita Barnes (age: 30) of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for perpetrating a \$2.3 million health care fraud and kickback scheme that involved Barnes lying about having provided prenatal care coordination (PNCC) services and childcare coordination services to at-risk and low-income pregnant women and new mothers in Milwaukee.

According to the indictment, from October 2020 through November 2021, Barnes owned Here For You, which was a PNCC agency operating in Milwaukee. PNCC agencies are reimbursed by Medicaid when they provide services intended to address Wisconsin's historically high rate of infant mortality among at-risk populations. Specifically, PNCC services are supposed to ensure that women at high risk are identified as early as possible in their pregnancies, receive psychosocial support, prenatal care services, and health and nutrition education, and are referred to available community services that they need to help them achieve positive birth and parenting outcomes.

The indictment alleges that Barnes offered and provided kickbacks to induce women to sign up for prenatal care coordination services with Here For You, and then allegedly submitted millions of dollars of fraudulent claims for services never actually provided to those women. Barnes also allegedly submitted claims for services she contended were provided to her clients before she or anyone from her agency had ever met the client.

The indictment charges Barnes with multiple counts of Health Care Fraud and False Statements Relating to Health Care Matters, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1347 and 18 U.S.C. § 1035, violations of the Anti-Kickback Statute, 42 U.S.C. § 1320a-7b, Obstruction of a Healthcare Fraud Investigation, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1518, Money Laundering, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1957, and Aggravated Identity Theft, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1028A.

If convicted, Barnes faces a mandatory sentence of two years in prison for each count of Aggravated Identity Theft, up to twenty years in prison for each count of Health Care Fraud, up to ten years in prison for each count of Anti-Kickback Statute violations and Money Laundering, and up to five years in prison for each count of False Statements and Obstruction.

“One of the primary reasons the Department of Justice focuses on prosecuting health care fraud is to ensure public funds are used to help the people they are designed to help, and not to unfairly enrich others at the expense of the public and those who desperately need these services,” said U.S. Attorney Haanstad. “We are committed to working with our federal, state, and local partners to hold individuals who seek to take advantage of these programs for their own benefit fully accountable for their actions.”

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Medicaid Fraud Control and Elder Abuse Unit of the Wisconsin Department of Justice investigated the case, which Assistant United States Attorneys Julie F. Stewart and Kate M. Biebel will prosecute.

An indictment is only a charge and not evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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