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United States Attorney's Office
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News Release

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Zimmerman woman sentenced for health care fraud

A 37-year-old Zimmerman woman was sentenced today in federal court on one count of health care fraud in connection with fraudulent Medicaid billing practices. The defendant used her home health care agency to bill the Medicaid program for services that had not been provided.

On Feb. 26 in Minneapolis, United States District Court Judge Joan Ericksen sentenced Michelle Barbara Pundt to 18 months in prison, three years of supervised release and ordered to pay \$350,000 in restitution. Pundt was charged on June 11, 2008, and pleaded guilty on Sept. 9.

According to Pundt's plea agreement, from January 2002 to June 2007, she knowingly and willfully obtained by false representations money owed by and under the custody and control of Medicaid, in connection with the delivery of and payment for health care benefits and services.

Specifically, Pundt admitted she submitted and caused to be submitted Medicaid claims that overstated the number of units of Private Duty Nursing services provided to clients of her business, Allied Home Health Care Services.

Medicaid is a federal health care benefit program that began in 1965 and is administered by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). The program provides medical insurance for individuals whose incomes are insufficient to meet the cost of necessary medical expenses and who satisfy certain eligibility criteria.

"Our federal and state partners in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Minnesota Medicaid Fraud Control Unit did an outstanding job in investigating this case," said U.S. Attorney Frank J. Magill. "Home health care fraud drains important resources from our nation's Medicaid program and undermines the integrity of an important component of our nation's health care system. We will continue to focus on prosecuting individuals who seek to exploit the Medicare and Medicaid programs."

"We are pleased that through the joint efforts of the Minnesota Attorney General's Office and the federal government that Ms. Pundt has been held accountable for the fraud she

committed and that money will be returned to the taxpayers,” said Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson.

This case was the result of an investigation by DHS, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-Office of Inspector General and the Minnesota Medicaid Fraud Control Unit. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney David M. Genrich.