

## NEWS RELEASE

# Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### AG STRANGE ANNOUNCES CONVICTION OF OWNER OF MACON COUNTY COUNSELING SERVICE FOR MEDICAID FRAUD

(MONTGOMERY)--Attorney General Luther Strange announced the conviction today of the owner of a Tuskegee counseling service for billing the Alabama Medicaid Agency for services that were not provided to Medicaid recipients. Lula Jones Bridges, 53, of Notasulga, is the owner of Hope for Families and Community Services, a nonprofit counseling service. Bridges pleaded guilty today before Montgomery County Circuit Judge J.R. Gaines to one count of Medicaid fraud, a Class C felony. No sentencing date has been set.

The case was investigated by the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, after an audit by the Alabama Medicaid Agency's Program Integrity Division was initiated because Hope for Families was one of the state's top billers of psychology services during 2013. The Medicaid Fraud Control Unit's investigation found that there was no documentation to support most of the services billed to Medicaid by Bridges, that patient sign-in sheets and progress notes had been fabricated, and that counseling sessions were billed for clients who were out-of-state during the alleged dates of service. In addition, many parents were told that they were enrolling their children in an after-school program and had never authorized Bridges to perform or bill for behavioral counseling services.

Medicaid Fraud Control Unit prosecutors contend that more than \$500,000 of the billings submitted by Bridges to the Medicaid Agency between November 2011 and October 2014 were fraudulent or without proper documentation. Judge Gaines has scheduled a restitution hearing for January 29 to determine the amount of loss to the Medicaid Agency.

"This case involved an outrageous deception of both clients and people who were claimed as clients, as well as an appalling theft of public funds from the Alabama Medicaid Agency," said Attorney General Strange. "I am pleased that we have been able to bring this criminal to justice and will fight to recover the taxpayers' stolen money."

Attorney General Strange commended his Medicaid Fraud Control Unit for its investigation and prosecution of this case, and thanked the Medicaid Agency's Program Integrity Division.

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