



# Former DHH employee admits to stealing more than \$1 million from state Medicaid program

POSTED 4:48 PM, OCTOBER 9, 2014, BY WGNO WEB DESK

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**BATON ROUGE** — A former accountant for the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) has pleaded guilty to defrauding the state out of more than \$1 million, announced Attorney General Buddy Caldwell.



Deborah Crowder Loper

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Deborah Crowder Loper, 47, of 9642 Hardwood Drive, Baton Rouge, pleaded guilty today in the 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court to one count each of felony theft by fraud and malfeasance in office for intentionally using her position of public trust to defraud DHH by misappropriating public funds for personal use, largely to foot the bill for a gambling addiction.

As part of the plea, Loper is set to receive a 10 year prison sentence, with five years suspended, and five years of active supervised probation. She has also agreed to pay \$1,018,424 in restitution to State of Louisiana. Formal sentencing is set for

Dec. 4 before 19<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court Judge Richard “Chip” Moore.

Today’s plea is a result a joint investigation conducted by the Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, Louisiana Office of the Inspector General, Louisiana Legislative Auditor’s Office, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG) and the Federal Bureau of Investigations.

Attorney General Buddy Caldwell said, “Ms. Loper stole more than a million dollars of taxpayer money meant for vital health care services for our most vulnerable Medicaid recipients. This outrageous behavior that erodes public trust and confidence in state government will not be tolerated.”

“We appreciate the assistance of State Inspector General Stephen Street and the cooperation of DHH Chief Compliance Officer William Root in bringing this matter to a successful resolution,” added Caldwell.

“We have implemented a number of safeguards aimed at preventing fraud and theft within our Department,” said DHH Chief Compliance Officer William Root. “Individuals who seek to steal from government are ultimately stealing from all Louisiana residents, especially those who need the services paid for with state funds. We are grateful that the Attorney General’s office pursued this case and are pleased that Ms. Loper is being held responsible for her actions.”

As an accountant administrator within DHH’s Division of Fiscal Management, Loper was charged with managing the financial activities of a bank account opened on behalf of the National Association of State Human Services Financial Officers (NASHSFO) to facilitate the association’s 2009 winter conference, which was held in New Orleans.

After the 2009 conference, Loper was instructed to close the account by her immediate supervisor. However, it was determined that Loper fabricated documents and subsequently submitted those documents, giving the appearance that the account was closed. She changed the address on the account so that she

was able to receive all correspondence for the account, including monthly statements of transactions, at her private residence.

From March 2007 through January 2013, Loper deposited more than 130 checks totaling \$1,018,423.32 into the account which were not payable to NASHSFO. Those checks deposited by Loper were made payable to DHH, Medicaid Payment Management Section and Medicaid Refunds. The primary source of those funds was identified as Medicaid reimbursements which were issued to DHH by licensed Medicaid providers and were intended to be returned to the state's Medicaid program. During the course of the investigation, it was found that the majority of the money was spent at area casinos. Loper was arrested in June 2013.