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Former DHH employee accused of swindling \$1M in Medicaid funds

Advocate staff report
 June 04, 2013

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A former state Department of Health and Hospitals accountant was arrested Tuesday on allegations she defrauded the state's Medicaid program out of more than \$1 million — money she allegedly used for gambling at area casinos.

Deborah Crowder Loper, 46, 9642 Hardwood Drive, was booked into the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison on counts of theft by fraud, money laundering, and malfeasance in office for using her position to misappropriate public funds for personal use, authorities said in a news release.

Attorney General Buddy Caldwell said Loper would be prosecuted "to the fullest extent of the law."

"Ms. Loper squandered hundreds of thousands of tax dollars meant for invaluable health care services for Louisiana's Medicaid recipients and used her position as a public servant for her own personal gain," Caldwell said in the release.

Loper had been entrusted to manage a bank account opened on behalf of the National Association of State Human Services Financial Officers to facilitate the association's 2009 winter conference in Louisiana, the release says. She was instructed to close the account after the conference, authorities said, but she fabricated documents making it appear the account had been closed and changed the address on the account so she could receive monthly statements at her home.

Between March 2007 and January, authorities said, Loper deposited more than 130 checks — totaling \$1,058,446.27 — that had been made payable to DHH, Medicaid Payment Management Section and Medicaid

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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,” the release says. “During the course of the investigation, it was found that the majority of the money was spent at area casinos.”

Loper resigned in February after learning the account had been frozen for potential fraudulent activity, the release says. Her attorney contacted DHH officials and notified them they should review the bank account.

“The fact that a state employee was able to steal over a million dollars of taxpayer money is shocking enough,” Inspector General Stephen Street said in a statement. “Of particular concern to us are the conditions that allowed Ms. Loper to engage in this scheme over a period of years without being detected.”

DHH Interim Secretary Kathy Kliebert said in a statement that the department is cooperating with the state’s investigation and continuing to revise its process for internal audits.

“We will continue to look at new ways to prevent and quickly identify instances of potential employee theft or fraud,” she said in the statement.

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1) Comment by mj6338 - 06/04/2013
this is just one more manifestation of Edwin Edwards' "gambling for Louisiana" legacy

2) Comment by Hello Baton Rouge - 06/04/2013
"...and changed the address on the account so she could receive monthly statements at her home".... What a criminal mastermind LOL... This woman is an ignorant incompetent thief whom I hope spends time in jail. She's nothing more than a thug who holds up the corner store, only this time the corner store is owned by every citizen of the state.

3) Comment by beabea - 06/04/2013
@Abercrombie: And for former state employees like Mr. Greenstein. I guess it is hard to institute proper accounting controls in your department when you are busy trying to keep your fingerprints off the lucrative contracts you are funneling to your friends.

4) Comment by Abercrombie - 06/04/2013