



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local physician assistant arrested for unlawfully practicing medicine

BROWNSVILLE, Texas - A 49-year-old Brownsville man has been charged for his role in a scheme to defraud Medicaid by working with a suspended medical license, announced U.S. Attorney Jennifer Lowery.

Law enforcement took Fernando Mendez into custody this past weekend. He is expected to make his initial appearance before U.S. Magistrate Judge Ronald G. Morgan at 9:30 a.m. today.

According to the indictment, returned Aug. 26 and unsealed today, Mendez was a physician assistant at CCI Therapy Counseling Centers International.

On July 20, 2021, the Texas Medical Board allegedly ordered the immediate suspension of Mendez's physician assistant license, deeming him to be a "continuing threat to public welfare." He was then prohibited from practicing medicine, according to the charges.

However, Mendez allegedly continued to evaluate and treat patients at mental health clinics in Brownsville, Harlingen and Pharr and billed Medicaid for services he rendered during his suspension.

The indictment further alleges Mendez attempted to conceal his continued practice of medicine by using identities of other physicians and medical personnel. Specifically, Mendez allegedly created medical records under the identities of other physicians while they were traveling outside of the United States. The charges also allege Mendez submitted false statements to the Texas Medical Board in an effort to conceal his improper practice of medicine.

Mendez is charged with seven counts of health care fraud for which he faces up to 10 years in federal prison. If convicted of any of the four aggravated identity theft charges, he faces another two years which must be served consecutively to any other prison term imposed. All counts also carry as possible fine of up to \$250,000.

The FBI, Department of Health and Human Services-Office of Inspector General, Texas Health and Human Services and Texas Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, and Department of Homeland Security-Office of Inspector General conducted the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew Swartz is prosecuting the case.

An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence.

A defendant is presumed innocent unless convicted through due process of law.

Topic(s):

Health Care Fraud

Component(s):

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