



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

News Release

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WOMAN GETS JAIL FOR WELFARE FRAUD

HONOLULU-Attorney General Mark Bennett announced today that on June 17, 2003, First Circuit Court Judge Karl K. Sakamoto sentenced Honolulu resident Lori Ann M.C. Santiago, 33, to thirty days in jail as a special condition of five years probation for two counts of theft in the second degree. Ms. Santiago, the mother of three minor children, was also ordered to pay \$19,540.00 in restitution to the State of Hawaii for fraudulently obtained welfare benefits between 1996 and 2002. Ms. Santiago concealed from the Department of Human Services that one of her minor children was living on the Mainland.

Theft in the second degree is a class C felony punishable by up to five years in prison and by a fine of up to \$10,000 or twice the pecuniary gain from the crime whichever is greater.

During the first calendar quarter of 2003, the Criminal Justice Division of the Department of the Attorney General and county prosecutors successfully prosecuted thirty individuals for felony offenses that involved fraudulently obtaining more than \$648,000 in welfare benefits. During the same period, twenty more individuals were indicted for felony offenses involving the alleged theft of an additional \$243,000 in welfare benefits. Those cases remain pending. An additional 154 individuals were administratively disqualified from receiving public assistance because of intentional program violations.

Many of these criminal and administrative actions were the result of anonymous tips from concerned citizens.

Anyone having information concerning possible welfare fraud should call the Welfare Fraud Hotline at 808 587-8444. Calls to the Hotline save the State of Hawaii millions of dollars every year.

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