

Georgia urgent care chain agrees to pay \$1,600,000 to resolve False Claim Act allegations

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Georgia

ATLANTA - CRH Healthcare, LLC and Peachtree Immediate Care FP, LLC agreed to pay \$1,600,000 to resolve allegations that they violated the False Claims Act (FCA) by submitting improperly upcoded Evaluation and Management claims to Medicare for the testing and treatment of patients with suspected exposure to COVID-19 during the Coronavirus pandemic.

"Health care professionals provided an invaluable service to the public during the Coronavirus pandemic. But medical practices that seek to misrepresent the services they provide to patients, and to improperly profit from such practices, must be held accountable," said U.S. Attorney Ryan K. Buchanan. "The Department of Justice will work diligently to protect taxpayer dollars by ensuring that medical providers fairly and accurately bill federal health care programs."

"When providers submit improper claims to Medicare, they waste valuable taxpayer dollars," said Tamala E. Miles, Special Agent in Charge with the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General (HHS-OIG). "Health care providers played a critical role in keeping our nation safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, and HHS-OIG is committed to protecting federal health care programs from fraud, waste, and abuse to ensure they can be used for their intended purposes."

"The FBI is thankful for the honesty of the whistleblowers who stepped forward to identify this alleged fraud," said Keri Farley, Special Agent in Charge of FBI Atlanta. "The FBI and our law enforcement partners will continue to pursue reports of medical facilities filing false or misleading claims, choices that ultimately rob our citizens."

The FCA is a federal law that imposes civil liability on any persons or entities who submit, or cause to be submitted, false claims for payment to the federal government or

its contractors. It imposes treble damages (that is, three times the loss caused by the false claims) and a civil penalty between \$13,508 to \$27,018 per false claim. The FCA is the primary authority used by the Civil Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office to redress fraud, waste, and abuse within federal programs, including Medicare.

This civil settlement resolves lawsuits filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia by former employees of CRH Healthcare, LLC, under the *qui tam*, or whistleblower provisions, of the FCA. Under the FCA, private citizens may bring suit for false claims on behalf of the United States and share in any recovery obtained by the government. The whistleblowers will share in \$320,000 from the settlement in this matter.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The civil settlement was reached by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andres H. Sandoval. The claims resolved by the settlement are allegations only, and there has been no determination of liability.

On May 17, 2021, the Attorney General established the COVID-19 Fraud Enforcement Task Force to marshal the resources of the Department of Justice in partnership with agencies across government to enhance efforts to combat and prevent pandemic-related fraud. The Task Force bolsters efforts to investigate and prosecute the most culpable domestic and international criminal actors and assists agencies tasked with administering relief programs to prevent fraud by, among other methods, augmenting and incorporating existing coordination mechanisms, identifying resources and techniques to uncover fraudulent actors and their schemes, and sharing and harnessing information and insights gained from prior enforcement efforts. For more information on the Department's response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>

Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice's National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCDF Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

For further information please contact the U.S. Attorney's Public Affairs Office at USAGAN.PressEmails@usdoj.gov or (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is <http://www.justice.gov/usao-ndga>.

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