



U.S. Department of Justice

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PRESS RELEASE

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UPDATE

In a ruling issued in March 2013, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals reversed the conviction in this case for insufficient evidence.

Certified Nursing Assistant Sentenced to Jail Term For Criminal Negligence

WASHINGTON – Ophelia Tarpeh, 40, a certified nursing assistant formerly employed at Leewood Healthcare Center, a Virginia residential long-term care provider, was sentenced today on a charge of criminal negligence of a vulnerable adult, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. and District of Columbia Inspector General Charles J. Willoughby announced.

Tarpeh, of Alexandria, Va., was found guilty of the charge on February 1, 2011 after a trial in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia before the Honorable Judge Florence Pan. Today, Judge Pan sentenced Tarpeh to 180 days in prison, with all but 12 days suspended, and one year of supervised probation. Additionally, the Court ordered Tarpeh not to work with vulnerable adults, to perform 100 hours of community service, and to pay \$100 to a victims' compensation fund.

According to testimony at trial, on February 23, 2009, Tarpeh had been a certified nursing assistant for 10 years. On that date, she was assigned to escort a Leewood resident, a vulnerable adult, to a dental appointment at the Washington Hospital Center in Washington, D.C. The resident is paralyzed on her right side and unable to speak.

Tarpeh and the resident were dropped off at the wrong hospital. Tarpeh then pushed the resident, in a wheelchair with no footrests, from the wrong location in the direction of the facility where she had an appointment. The resident's shoeless foot dragged along the concrete sidewalk and asphalt street for up to 800 feet. As a result, one of her toes was so severely injured that amputation was required.

In announcing the conviction and sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen and Inspector General Willoughby praised the work of former Investigator Meghan Strickland and Investigator Shanetha Gaines of the Office of the Inspector General Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU) for their investigation of the criminal negligence. They also commended the work of Assistant U.S. Attorney Demian Ahn and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Jacqueline N. Schesnol of the MFCU, who jointly prosecuted the case.

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