

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**AG Balderas Announces Three Year Sentence for Counselor
Accused of Defrauding State's Medicaid Program**

LAS CRUCES — Today, New Mexico Attorney General Hector Balderas announced that Cathy Chidester, who operated Drop In Counseling in Las Cruces, was sentenced to three years in the Department of Corrections and immediately remanded to custody. Ms. Chidester pled guilty to fraudulently billing New Mexico's Medicaid program for children's counseling, when in fact, public school records showed that the children were in class attending school during the alleged counseling sessions. Additionally, Chidester was ordered to pay more than \$177,000 in restitution.

"Theft from taxpayer-funded programs will not be tolerated, and my office will continue to take down bad actors that steal resources from our most vulnerable," said Attorney General Balderas.

This case was investigated and prosecuted by the Office of the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU). MFCU receives 75 percent of its funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services under a grant award totaling \$3,774,509 for Federal fiscal year (FY) 2021-22, of which \$2,830,884 is federally funded. The remaining 25 percent of the approved grant, totaling \$943,625 for FY 2021-22, is funded by the State of New Mexico.

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