



THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

United States Attorney Dena J. King

United States Attorney's Office
Western District of North Carolina

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CAREER COACH IS SENTENCED TO TWO YEARS IN PRISON FOR STEALING MORE THAN \$68,000 FROM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Jessica Anne Miller, 39, of Hickory, N.C., was sentenced to 24 months in prison today on a wire fraud charge, for stealing more than \$68,000 from a federally funded workforce development program, announced Dena J. King, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina. U.S. District Judge Kenneth D. Bell also ordered Miller to serve two years of supervised release.

U.S. Attorney King is joined in making this announcement by Rafiq Ahmad, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Atlanta Region of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG).

According to filed court documents and today's sentencing hearing, from July 2016 to November 2019, Miller was employed as a career coach by an entity contracted by a nonprofit association of local governments to provide training to job seekers, using federal funds made available by the U.S. Department of Labor under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). WIOA was signed into law in 2014, and it is designed to provide qualified individuals with access to training, education, and support services, and assistance with obtaining employment. As part of WIOA, qualified individuals can also be reimbursed for certain eligible expenditures such as mileage, costs and fees, and tools of the trade, among others.

As a career coach, Miller was responsible for providing career guidance, case management and follow up to participants in the youth program. Miller previously admitted in court that, while serving as a career coach, she engaged in a scheme to divert government funds for her own benefit, by creating fraudulent documents, falsifying signatures, and making false and misleading statements to qualified individuals who were supposed to be the recipients of the WIOA funds.

In some instances, Miller created fraudulent documents for mileage reimbursement on behalf of students enrolled in the program, and then cashed the checks and kept the proceeds for herself. In other instances, Miller created fraudulent documents that falsely indicated that qualified individuals had made reimbursable purchases, such as tools of the trade, and were seeking reimbursement for those costs. Miller then submitted the fraudulent documents and cashed the reimbursement checks. Miller also created and submitted fraudulent documents, that included students' forged signatures, indicating that students had successfully completed certain milestones that would have entitled them to gift cards. Instead of providing those gift cards to qualifying students, Miller kept them for herself.

To further perpetuate the scheme, court documents show that Miller opened bank accounts and American Express accounts in the names of students without their knowledge and consent and used those accounts to cash the fraudulent reimbursement checks. In total, Miller defrauded at least 40 individuals and diverted more than \$68,000 in government funds for her own personal enrichment.

In making today's announcement, U.S. Attorney King commended DOL-OIG for their investigation of the case and thanked the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and the Conover Police Department for their invaluable assistance.

Assistant United States Attorney Maria Vento, of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Charlotte, prosecuted the case.

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