



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

News Release

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GUILTY VERDICT FOR NURSE AID IN ELDER ABUSE CASE

(HONOLULU) – On October 20, 2006, an Oahu jury found Certified Nurse Aid Maria Cobar guilty of four counts of abuse, involving patients at the Palolo Chinese Home. Cobar, 39-years old, will be sentenced on November 6, 2006, and faces up to four years in prison.

The convictions stem from Cobar's repeated abuse of patients at the home from December 1 – 21, 2004. The separate incidences of abuse consisted of: (1) Cobar injuring the thumb of an incapacitated 82-year-old male patient, (2) Cobar throwing the same male patient from his wheelchair to his bed, (3) Cobar standing idly by while the male patient repeatedly banged his head against a shower wall, and (4) Cobar purposely leaving an 86-year-old incontinent patient soiled because she did not want to change the patient and leaving her in that condition for the next shift to take care of. Each conviction is for the crime of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent Person, a misdemeanor, punishable by up to 1 year of jail and a \$2000 fine.

Cobar had been fired when fellow staff members reported the abuse to administrators at the home. The administrators relayed the information to the Department of the Attorney General, Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, which investigated and prosecuted the case. In addition to the possible jail term, Cobar faces potential fines and exclusion from employment at all Medicaid and Medicare affiliated facilities.

Attorney General Mark J. Bennett lauded the conviction, stating: "Caregivers who harm vulnerable adults will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Bennett encourages those with information about abuse of elders to report it to the Department of the Attorney General, Medicaid Fraud Control Unit at 586-1058.

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