



Two Amtrak employees plead guilty after accepting kickbacks in \$11 million health care fraud case

February 12, 2025

NEWARK, N.J. — Two Amtrak employees separately pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit health care fraud on February 11, 2025, and January 23, 2025, after accepting cash kickbacks from health care providers in an \$11 million health care fraud case.

Rodolfo Rivera, 41, of Clayton, Delaware, and Anthony Saloka, 44, of Elizabeth, New Jersey, separately pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Madeline Cox Arleo in Newark federal court to conspiracy to commit health care fraud. According to the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of New Jersey, eight other current and former Amtrak employees were also charged with conspiracy to commit health care fraud along with Rivera and Saloka on June 20, 2024. Rivera was the first to plead guilty.

According to court documents, Rivera and Saloka were given thousands of dollars in cash kickbacks for allowing health care providers to fraudulently bill Amtrak's health care plan for services that were never provided and that were not medically necessary. Three health care providers and a medical biller have also pleaded guilty for their part in the scheme, two of whom have been sentenced:

- Punson Figueroa, aka "Susie," an acupuncturist from Long Island City, New York, was sentenced September 24, 2024, to three years of supervised release and was ordered to pay restitution of \$9.05 million.
- Muhammed Mirza, a medical doctor from New Jersey, was sentenced on May 7, 2024, to 26 months in prison and was ordered to pay restitution of \$1.37 million.
- Michael DeNicola, a podiatrist from New York, pleaded guilty July 7, 2022, to conspiracy to commit health care fraud, distribution of a controlled substance, and unlawful possession of a firearm. DeNicola's sentencing is pending.
- Medical biller Regina Choi, 39, of Woodside, New York, who previously worked for Figueroa, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit health care fraud on June 11, 2024, for submitting false and fraudulent claims to the Amtrak health care plan and paying cash kickbacks to Amtrak employees. Choi's sentencing is pending.

In addition, a former Amtrak employee, Devon Burt of Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, pleaded guilty in June 2023 to charges of conspiracy to commit health care fraud and conspiracy to communicate extortionate threats. Burt and a co-conspirator, Hallum Gelzer, of East Orange, New Jersey, worked with health care providers to recruit Amtrak employees to participate in the scheme. Gelzer pleaded guilty to the same charges as Burt in June 2023. As part of their plea agreements, Burt agreed to pay \$959,072 in restitution, while Gelzer agreed to pay approximately \$1.66 million. Burt and Gelzer also admitted to threatening to injure a health care provider unless Gelzer was paid several thousand dollars.

Agents from Amtrak's Office of Inspector General investigated the case with support from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Amtrak Police Department.

Reports of fraud, waste, or abuse; criminal or unethical acts affecting Amtrak's property or operations; or mismanagement in Amtrak programs or operations can be made 24 hours a day via the Amtrak OIG Hotline at 1-800-468-5469 or online at <https://direc.to/hPAu>.

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