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NEWS RELEASE

FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF VICTIM CENTER INDICTED ON EMBEZZLEMENT CHARGES

The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, announced today the unsealing of an indictment charging the former Executive Director of the Rape and Victim Assistance Center (RAVC) of Schuylkill County, with embezzlement.

According to United States Attorney Peter J. Smith, Mary Beth Semerod, age 55, of Pottsville, Pennsylvania, was indicted by a Federal grand jury in Scranton on October 26, 2010. It is alleged that between June 2006 and June 2008, Semerod, took for her own use approximately \$100,000 which was in the custody of the Center.

If convicted, Semerod faces up to 10 years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

According to U.S. Attorney Smith, the RAVC had received grants of approximately \$250,000 in federal grant funds from the U.S. Department of Justice since 2005, through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). The funds were intended to be used for support of alleged victims of crimes against women. The embezzlement was discovered by PCCD when it attempted to conduct an audit of RAVC. Semerod was dismissed from her position as Executive Director in December 2008.

The United States Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General conducted the investigation. Prosecution has been assigned to Assistant United States Attorney John Gurganus.

An Indictment or Information is not evidence of guilt but simply a description of the charge made by the Grand Jury and/or United States Attorney against a defendant. A charged Defendant is presumed innocent until a jury returns a unanimous finding that the United States has proven the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt or until the defendant has pled guilty to the charges.