



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
DISTRICT *of* COLUMBIA

[U.S. Attorneys](#) » [District of Columbia](#) » [News](#)

Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Columbia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, April 14, 2017

Former Benefits Manager Sentenced to a Year in Prison For Embezzling More Than \$400,000 From University Plan

Defendant Routed Benefits Meant for Others to Her Own Account and Address

WASHINGTON – A former manager of an employee benefit plan at Howard University was sentenced today to a year and a day in prison for embezzling more than \$420,000, announced U.S. Attorney Channing D. Phillips and Michael Schloss, Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration, Philadelphia Region.

Crystal Duncan Baker, 38, of Silver Spring, Md., pled guilty in February 2017, in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, to a charge of theft or embezzlement from an employee benefit plan. She was sentenced by the Honorable James E. Boasberg. Following her prison term, she will be placed on three years of supervised release. She also is required to pay \$420,128 in restitution and an identical amount in a forfeiture money judgment.

According to the government's evidence, Baker worked for Howard University's Benefit and Pension Administration from August 2010 through May 2015. The office administers benefits to the university's administration, faculty, staff, and retirees. Baker began work as a temporary employee, but became full-time in September 2010, taking on the role of benefit supervisor. In December 2011, she became manager of benefits and pension. In both positions, she could make unilateral changes to the benefits plan without anyone's approval.

Baker made unauthorized changes to six former Howard University employee's pension accounts, one retired and five deceased. The changes included updated bank information that coincided with Baker's personal checking account, routing number, and mailing address. Between April 2012 through August 2015, Baker fraudulently embezzled \$420,128 by directing banks to make fraudulent pension disbursements to her checking account and home address instead of to the six victims' accounts. She used this money for her own expenses and benefit.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Phillips and Regional Director Schloss commended the work of those who investigated the case from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employee Benefits Security Administration. They also expressed appreciation for the work of those who handled the case at

the U.S. Attorney's Office, including former Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Vesna Harasic-Yaksic, who assisted with forfeiture issues, Criminal Investigator Nicole S. Hinson, and Paralegal Specialist Aisha Keys. Finally, they acknowledged the work of Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kendra D. Briggs and Derrick Williams, who investigated and prosecuted the case.

Topic(s):

Financial Fraud

Component(s):USAO - District of Columbia**Press Release Number:**

17-078

Updated April 18, 2017