

## Records released in state licensing bribery investigation

By David Gotfredson, Field Producer

SAN DIEGO, Calif. (CBS 8) -- A state licensing inspector at the center of a bribery investigation repeatedly cleared complaints filed against the operator of a Mira Mesa residential care facility for the elderly, according to California Department of Social Services records obtained by News 8.

Court records show the operator of the facility, Iris Ramirez, admitted to giving the inspector \$2,800 in cash, and paying \$1,044 for the inspector's vacation flight to the Philippines.

On Thursday, the California Department of Social Services released hundreds of pages of records to News 8 from its Community Care Licensing office in Mission Valley. The records detail the inspection history at four Mira Mesa care facilities owned by Ramirez called Ambassador Senior Retreat I, II, III, & IV.

The inspector, Licensing Program Analyst Conchita Valero, was assigned to monitor all four facilities between 2009 and early 2010, according to the records.

At Ambassador Senior Retreat I in the 8200 block of Hydra Lane in Mira Mesa, the inspection records reveal a series of complaints <http://ftpcontent.worldnow.com/kfmb/misc/complaints.pdf> filed against the assisted living home between 2007 and 2009.

One complaint said the facility's "room temperature was too cold," another said "facility staff are over medicating" a resident, and a third alleged the "facility is not maintaining a sufficient amount of food to sustain the residents in care."

The records reveal a total of 10 alleged violations against the facility that were later dismissed by state inspector Valero. Time and time again, Valero determined the allegations were "unfounded" and "dismissed the complaint," taking no action against the facility's owner, Iris Ramirez.

At her home in Murrieta, Ramirez told News 8 the cash paid to Valero and the airline ticket to the Philippines were "gifts." She declined to answer questions about the ongoing bribery investigation.

Inspection records from the three other senior care facilities owned by Ramirez show a similar pattern. Between 2007 and 2009, inspector Valero repeatedly found "no deficiencies" at the facilities.

It wasn't until 2010 - after the bribery investigation began - that new licensing program analysts took over and started finding problems when they inspected the assisted living homes owned by Ramirez.

Evaluation reports from Aug. 2010 found bathroom water too hot, missing medical records for residents, and old medications not destroyed.

News 8 was unable to contact Valero for comment at her home in Rancho Bernardo. She did not respond to a phone message requesting comment.

Valero and two other state inspectors - also accused of taking bribes -- no longer work at the Community Care Licensing office. Valero's employment terminated April 29, 2011, according to the California Department of Social Services.

LPA Lydia Williams was terminated from the Community Care Licensing office on April 27, 2011, officials said. A June 2 search warrant alleges Williams was paid bribe money in 2009; and that she accompanied Valero and Ramirez on their vacation to the Philippines.

The third LPA terminated from Community Care Licensing in Mission Valley was Cristina Nepomuceno, who left on Dec. 1, 2010, according to state officials. Nepomuceno was accused of accepting a \$3,000 "loan" from another facility operator, the search warrant said.

The bribery allegations are part of an ongoing investigation by the Department of Social Services, according to the search warrant. No criminal charges have been filed.