

East Alton Woman Sentenced To 14 Months In Prison For Stealing Disabled Daughter's Social Security Funds

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
October 29 2021 1:21 PM



EAST ST. LOUIS – An East Alton woman - 49-year-old Melissa D. Wasylak - was sentenced to 14 months in federal prison for stealing her disabled daughter's Social Security funds. The sentencing hearing was conducted this morning in Federal Court in East St. Louis.

The Social Security Administration administers the Supplemental Security Income (“SSI”) program. SSI provides a minimum level of income to aged, blind, and disabled individuals who have limited resources. Disabled children are eligible to receive SSI benefits. For children, SSI benefits are paid to a representative payee, who is responsible for handling the funds and reporting to the Social Security Administration. Federal law requires that all SSI funds must be used for the benefit of the disabled child.

According to court documents, Wasylak applied for her disabled daughter to receive SSI benefits. Wasylak was appointed as her daughter’s representative payee. In 2008, Wasylak’s daughter stopped living with her and went to live with Wasylak’s ex-husband. Despite this fact, Wasylak continued to receive her daughter’s SSI funds. As part of her guilty plea, Wasylak admitted that she did not use those funds for her daughter’s expenses, but instead used the SSI monies to pay her own personal expenses. This continued until the situation was reported to the Social Security Administration in May of 2019.

In addition to the 14-month prison term, the court also ordered Wasylak to serve a two-year period of supervised release following her release from prison. The court further ordered Wasylak to pay \$58,345 in restitution to the Social Security Administration.

The case was investigated by the St. Louis Office of the Social Security Administration – Office of the Inspector General.

Assistant United States Attorney Scott Verseman prosecuted the case.