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Attorney General Martha Coakley Enters into Settlement with Dentist and General Manager of Weymouth-Based Sierra Dental

Individuals to Pay \$92,500 to Resolve Allegations of Participation in Deceptive Sales Practices and Credit Billing Scheme

BOSTON - Today, Attorney General Martha Coakley's Office entered into two separate settlements with Dr. Mohamed Jawad Shakarchi, a dentist who practiced at Weymouth-based Sierra Dental from 2005 to late 2006, and Robert V. Whelan, the general manager at Sierra Dental from 2005 to early 2007. The complaints, filed today in Suffolk Superior Court, allege that Shakarchi worked in concert with business managers at Sierra Dental to arrange and promote financing for dental treatment plans on unfair and deceptive terms and alleges that Whelan perpetuated deceptive marketing and sales protocols to ensure that patient volume and cash from credit arrangements remained high at the dental practice.

Under the terms of today's settlements, Dr. Shakarchi must pay \$20,000 in consumer restitution and \$7,500 in civil penalties to the Commonwealth. Dr. Shakarchi has also entered into an agreement with the Board of Registration in Dentistry (BORID), which requires him to, among other things, fulfill certain additional continuing education requirements and to complete a skills assessment conducted by a licensed dentist in good standing in the Commonwealth. Mr. Whelan must pay \$40,000 in consumer restitution and \$25,000 in civil penalties to the Commonwealth. The consent judgments also prohibit Dr. Shakarchi and Mr. Whelan from engaging in unfair and deceptive credit, billing and sales practices in the future. Restitution will be paid to consumers who suffered damages as a result of unfair and deceptive acts or practices that occurred at Sierra Dental and two, related Fall River-based dental clinics, Spectrum Dental and Coast Dental.

The Attorney General's Office opened an investigation into Sierra Dental in September 2007, after receiving consumer complaints about the practice, which closed abruptly at the end of 2007.

Today's settlements are the third and fourth enforcement actions involving allegations of unfair and deceptive practices at Sierra Dental filed by the Attorney General's Office.

In April 2008, the Attorney General's Office filed a complaint and obtained a consent judgment against Dr. William Salisbury, a dentist at Sierra Dental who abandoned his practice and failed to complete dental procedures and treatments for more than 50 patients. Dr. Salisbury entered into a settlement with the Attorney General's Office in April 2008 and as part of that settlement paid \$20,000 to the Commonwealth and agreed not to renew his license to practice dentistry in Massachusetts.

In October 2008, the Attorney General's Office filed a complaint and obtained a preliminary injunction against Gary Anusavice, a dentist whose Massachusetts license was revoked by the Board of Registration in Dentistry in 2005, and 14 other individuals and corporations that allegedly operated 3 high-volume dental clinics through a web of corporate fronts in order to exploit patients and obtain funds from finance companies and insurers. According to the complaint, hundreds of patients were left with dental problems and thousands of dollars in debt after visiting Sierra Dental, Coast Dental and Spectrum Dental at their three dental operations in Fall River and Weymouth. This

matter is currently pending in Suffolk Superior Court.

Consumers with complaints about Spectrum Dental, Coast Dental or Sierra Dental should call the Attorney General's Health Care Hotline at 888-830-6277.

These cases are being handled by Special Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey D. Clements of Clements Law Office, LLC, Assistant Attorney General Gillian Feiner of Attorney General Coakley's Consumer Protection Division, and Mediator Beckie Peyton of Attorney General Coakley's Health Care Division.

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