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### ***Former Behavioral Health Employee Sentenced***

**SANTA FE, N.M.** - A Rio Rancho man, who was charged with tax evasion and embezzling from behavioral health company Easter Seals el Mirador, has been sentenced.

Ricardo Franco, 31, received a suspended nine-year prison sentence with the stipulation that he pay \$30,000 in restitution to his victim and \$10,264 to the State of New Mexico. Franco also received five years of supervised probation.

Franco was sentenced by Judge Mary Marlowe Sommer in the First Judicial District Court of Santa Fe.

“Let this sentence serve as a reminder to tax professionals that no one is above the law,” said Demesia Padilla Cabinet Secretary for the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department. “We will continue to relentlessly pursue those who violate our State’s Tax Laws.”

Franco worked as a financial specialist at Easter Seals el Mirador and, in October, pled no contest to one count of embezzlement (over \$20,000) from the behavioral health company and to failing to pay more than \$4,300 in personal income taxes to the State.

This case was investigated by the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department’s Tax Fraud Investigations Division and prosecuted by the First Judicial District Attorney’s Office. To report suspected tax fraud against the State of New Mexico, call the 24 hour Tax Fraud Hotline at 1-866-457-6789.

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