

# **Yarmouth Woman Pleads Guilty to Stealing \$64,953 in Social Security Disability Benefits**

A West Yarmouth woman pleaded guilty today in federal court in Boston to stealing Social Security disability benefits.

Crystal Lehtola, 35, pleaded guilty to one count of theft of public funds. U.S. District Court Judge William G. Young scheduled sentencing for Sept. 6, 2018. Lehtola was arrested and charged in August 2017.

From February 2011 through August 2016, Lehtola received approximately \$64,953 in benefits from the Social Security Administration intended for her disabled daughter. In order to be appointed as her daughter's representative payee, Lehtola told Social Security that her daughter lived with her and that she was her daughter's guardian. However, in April 2009, the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families removed Lehtola's daughter from her care, and although Lehtola never regained custody, she repeatedly advised Social Security that her daughter lived with her and that she spent all of the benefits on her daughter's care. In reality, Lehtola spent the funds on her own expenses.

The charge of theft of public funds provides for a sentence of no greater than 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss, whichever is greater. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

United States Attorney Andrew E. Lelling and Scott Antolik, Special Agent in Charge of the Social Security Administration, Office of Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Boston Field Division, made the announcement. Special Assistant U.S.

Attorney Karen Burzycki of Lelling's Major Crimes Unit is prosecuting the case.