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U.S. | NEW YORK | NY CRIME

Ex-Health Aide Sentenced to Prison for Stealing From Woman in Her 90s

Authorities say aide, who cared for now-99-year-old Upper East Side woman and her late husband, took hundreds of thousands of dollars

By **CORINNE RAMEY**

Aug. 12, 2016 5:48 p.m. ET

A former home health aide was sentenced Friday to prison for stealing several hundred thousand dollars from a couple in their late 90s who employed her.

Stephany Hernandez, 25 years old, pleaded guilty last month to second-degree grand larceny. She cared for the 99-year-old woman and her now-deceased husband, who lived on Manhattan's Upper East Side, prosecutors said.

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February 2014 to March 2015, Hernandez took more than \$260,000 by cashing or depositing 102 forged checks from the woman's accounts, they said.

Ms. Hernandez then paid off more than \$35,000 in credit-card debt, spent more than \$18,000 on clothing from stores, including Barneys New York and Bloomingdale's, took trips to Miami and the Dominican Republic and withdrew more than \$100,000 in cash.

In January 2015, after the woman's 100-year-old husband died, her son noticed and reported the crime.

On Friday, a judge sentenced Ms. Hernandez from 1½ to 4½ years in prison and ordered her to repay the money.

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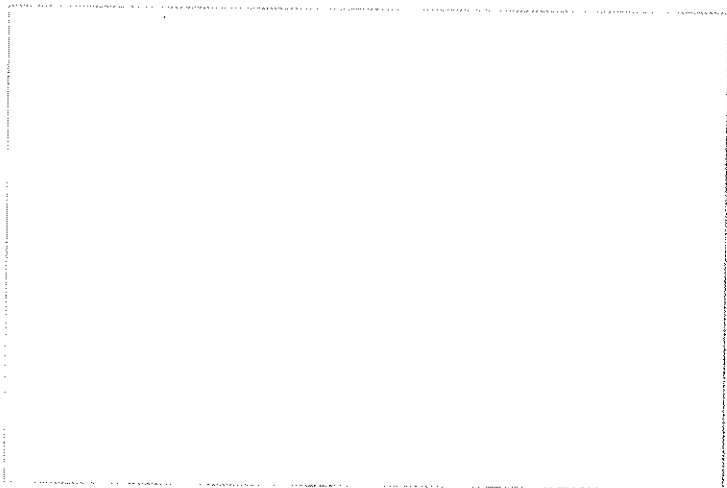
Ms. Hernandez is pregnant and will be able to stay with her baby while in prison, said her attorney, Edward Sapone.

Law-enforcement authorities often consider crimes in which an older person is taken advantage of financially to be part of a larger category of elder abuse.

Those who study elder abuse say such crimes are difficult to quantify because they are often underreported. One state study found one in 44 incidents of financial abuse of the elderly is reported in New York.

In New York City, a subway and bus ad campaign was started in the spring to increase reporting of such crimes.

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