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recipients of past awards are my mentors and my heroes — Dr. James O’Brien and Dr. Jane Thibault. When I was at the University of Louisville getting my master’s degree in social work gerontology, I did my internship with U of L family medicine, geriatric medicine. I worked under them, and I learned so much about aging that helped me in my personal life with my aging mom, but also with the cases of medical issues that I have now. I am not medical, I am law enforcement — I don’t know medical issues, so I have to rely on other people to help me. But, I learned so much about the aging process — what’s normal, what’s not normal — that helped me in my career. As far as how I received the award, I don’t know, but I’m honored. I guess, just work. You work and someone sees you’re trying.

A June 2010 AG’s office press release, said that since 2008, the Medicaid Fraud and Abuse Control Office had tripled the number of abuse investigations and increased six-fold the amount of Medicaid fraud recovery for taxpayers. How has this been possible? What changes were made for such a dramatic increase in just two and one half years?

Many of those were provider frauds because that is where you recover your money. I would say it was having our prosecutors take our cases through the courts and having some sort of plea agreement or conviction. At that point, it is always the money that we determine has been fraudulently obtained, and they are able to recoup for Medicaid. Not all cases are in trial. Most times it is going to be a plea agreement. Many facilities will agree to pay back money because they got caught. It depends on what it is whether they are going to lose their license. If you are convicted of a felony, you lose your license and are not able to be in the Medicaid

program anymore. So, there is a lot at stake with these providers because that is their livelihood. It is very delicate as to what they are going to agree to. But, we definitely want that money back. Our Medicaid system is really bad. We try to focus on getting that money back, but also we want to put people out of those programs if they are going to steal from it.

Has obtaining prosecutions gotten progressively easier as laws are enacted and people get more used to them?

It depends on what the case is and what your evidence is. It is so hard to prove intent because their defense is, ‘It was an accident.’ They will say, ‘My billing officer put the wrong code in.’ You have to prove that they did it fraudulently, and that is very difficult to do. These cases are extremely hard. They are time consuming. It takes a long time to get all the evidence you need to get the case to where they absolutely knew what they were doing, and they did it anyway.

What would you say is a typical length of time you would spend on a case? How many do you have ongoing at one time?

We’re not talking days, we’re not talking months. We are talking years. For a fraud case it takes a very, very, very long time.

We divided our state into an east side and a west side for our investigators. There are five for the east and five for the west. We pick our cases accordingly. Some of them are in different areas, so we try to help assign investigators cases that are closer to them. There are two of us in Louisville, but I have a case down in Paducah. It just depends on the luck of the draw what you get. We could have between 10 and 20 cases, and then in the mean time we get those preliminary cases to where we are not sure if there is anything to them, so we have to do some investigating on those to see if they meet the criteria before we can go any further. We get a lot of those.

When we get a complaint, it is one sided. We cannot make a determination whether it is something we are going to work or not by just hearing one side. We have to look further into hearing the other side, putting it together and seeing where we go with it. We will work with Adult Protective Services because they go out very quickly, especially on abuse and >>