



## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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*VENTURA, California* – District Attorney Gregory D. Totten announced today that Orange County resident Sergio Sanchez Santibanez (DOB 9/17/81) has pleaded guilty to felony grand theft and felony foreclosure consultant fraud. The charges were the result of an investigation conducted by the District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud Unit.

The charges arose from a fraudulent short sale and foreclosure rescue program called Foreclosure Legal Services (FLS) based in the city of Orange. Santibanez lured struggling homeowners with false promises to save their homes from foreclosure. FLS promised to purchase distressed properties for less than what was owed (a short sale) and to later sell the properties back to victims at a reduced price. Once lured in, victims were charged thousands of dollars in illegal up-front fees but received no actual services.

Santibanez will be sentenced on September 9, 2015, at 9:00 a.m. in courtroom 12. It is expected he will be sentenced to 365 days in jail and placed on three years of formal probation. The District Attorney's Real Estate Fraud Unit secured \$30,000 in victim restitution from Santibanez at the time of his plea. At the time of the sentencing, he will be ordered to pay any outstanding restitution.

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