THE KANSAN

Kaufman sentenced to 15 years in prison in 'nude therapy' case

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WICHITA (AP) -- A Kansas nurse convicted of enslaving mentally ill residents of a Newton group home was sentenced to 15 years in prison Monday after a federal judge acknowledged the original seven-year term was too short.

Linda Kaufman and her husband, Arlan, were convicted in November 2006 of forcing residents to work naked and perform sex acts, while billing the government and their families for "nude therapy" sessions.

A federal appeals court upheld the convictions but sent Linda Kaufman's case back to U.S. District Judge Monti Belot to reconsider her seven-year sentence.

Her social worker husband was sentenced to 30 years.

Trial testimony had indicated a stun gun was used on a resident's genitals.

Belot found while reconsidering sentencing it should be considered a dangerous weapon. He also found that a large number of residents were vulnerable victims and added time for obstruction of justice.

"I appreciate being given the opportunity to consider a new and appropriate sentence for the defendant," Belot said Monday.

Nancy Jensen, a 53-year-old Wichita woman who was a resident at the home for 11 months in 1986, said she felt vindicated after Monday's sentencing and hugged Assistant U.S. Attorney Tanya Treadway.

"I feel the survivors of the Kaufman House can rest assured they can't hurt us any more," Jensen told reporters outside the courthouse. Treadway declined to comment.

Jensen said she was upset at Linda Kaufman's statements Monday in which the nurse disclosed private medical information about Jensen's mental illness, saying it seemed as if Kaufman was trying to hurt her again.

“They just don’t get it, how they really messed up our lives,” Jensen said.

Trial testimony showed the Kaufmans controlled every aspect of the lives of the mentally ill people they cared for, including deciding where they could sleep, what they ate and who could wear clothes. Witnesses testified that residents were forced to masturbate, fondle each other and shave each others’ genitals while being videotaped.

Belot said while Arlan Kaufman was primarily responsible for the “aberrant mistreatment” of the residents, his wife kept the Kaufman House in business through decades of health-care fraud, mail fraud, lack of documentation of “treatment” and a persistent effort to hide wrongdoing.

Defense attorney Steven Gradert said after the hearing he had not yet spoken to his client about whether they would appeal the new sentence, but noted it still is a 12-year downward departure from federal sentencing guidelines.

Linda Kaufman’s family issued a written statement expressing disappointment that so much time had been added after Kaufman served two-thirds of her original sentence as a model prisoner.

Treadway “already took everything away from my mother four years ago, but yet she came back for more. Contrary to public opinion, these convictions arose out of poor judgment, but not malice. It is disappointing the judge did not give more weight to that fact. Imprisoning a 66-year-old, non-violent woman for 15 years accomplishes nothing,” said the statement from their children, Michael and Cheryl Kaufman.