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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 17, 2003

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WATERBURY WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING AMERICORP FUNDS

Kevin J. O'Connor, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced today that BERNADETTE TEELE, age 35, of 80 Pine Street, Unit #2, Waterbury, Connecticut, pleaded guilty to theft of government property. The plea of guilty was accepted on November 14, 2003 by Senior United States District Judge Peter C. Dorsey in federal court New Haven.

According to documents filed in Court and statements at the court hearing, between January, 1999 and December, 1999, the defendant, BERNADETTE TEELE, was a member of the AmeriCorps program, a Corporation for National and Community Service federal program that provides Americans with a stipend and/or educational award in exchange for a period of community service that addresses unmet needs in education, public safety, human services, and the environment. During the period of TEELE'S membership, full-time participants were additionally entitled to childcare services through the Corporation if they met certain other eligibility requirements. During the period during which TEELE was an AmeriCorps member, she received benefits for her five (5) children, but falsely certified that she received childcare from the providers she identified, keeping a large percentage of the reimbursed subsidies for herself. Additionally, TEELE falsely certified that she was not receiving childcare subsidies from any other source during the relevant time frame, when, in fact, she was receiving childcare subsidies from a State of Connecticut Department of Social Services program. The total loss to the federal government is approximately $12,839.36 and the loss to the State of Connecticut is approximately $11,640.25.

TEELE faces up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of $250,000 when she is sentenced on February 6, 2003.

The case was investigated by Special Agents of the Corporation for National Service, Office of Inspector General in Washington, D.C., with the assistance of the State of Connecticut, Department of Social Services, Client Fraud Investigation Unit. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Deborah R. Slater.