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'Outstanding' Minnesota refugee faces charges in \$4.5M Medicaid, sex-trafficking scheme

By David DeTurris

Published Aug. 18, 2026, 9:14 p.m. ET

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An alleged Minnesota fraudster once hailed as a hero for reportedly part of a massive Medicaid fraud scheme worth over \$4.5 million.

Salman Ahmed Elmi, who was honored by the state's Department of Human Services in 2021 with the Outstanding Refugee Award for Entrepreneurship, was slapped with a total of eight

counts of aiding

Prosecutors said
agencies in Minn
— that scammed

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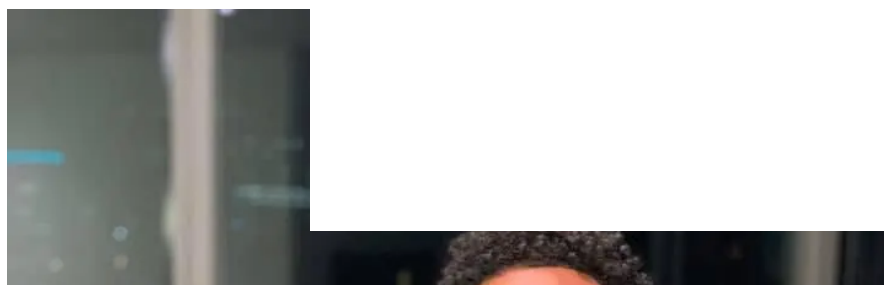
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Salman Ahmed Elmi was
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Prosecutors said that Elmi ran four phony agencies in the state he used to swindle millions out of Medicaid.

Facebook/ Salman Elmi

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Elmi himself billed to prosecutors.

ices, according

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Meanwhile, Elmi and his associates —
—were also running a related pay-for-se
addicted young women and rent apartn

The crew would then steal the identities
names, court records show.

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According to prosecutors, Elmi himself billed Medicaid for more than \$1 million in unprovided or illegible services.

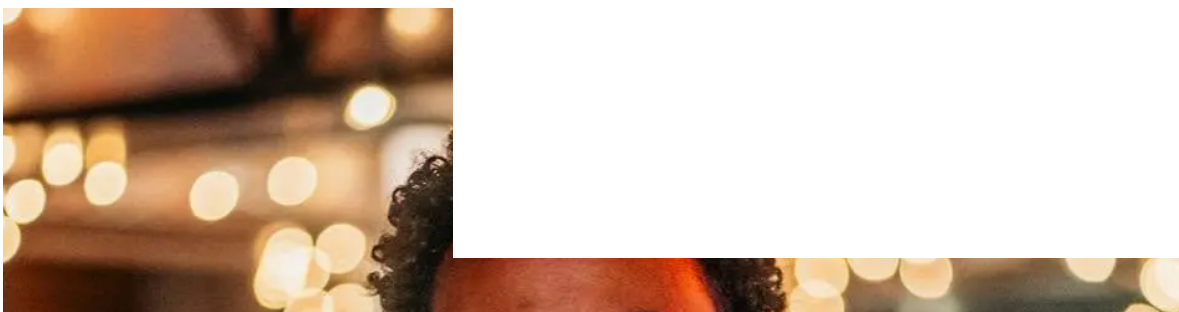
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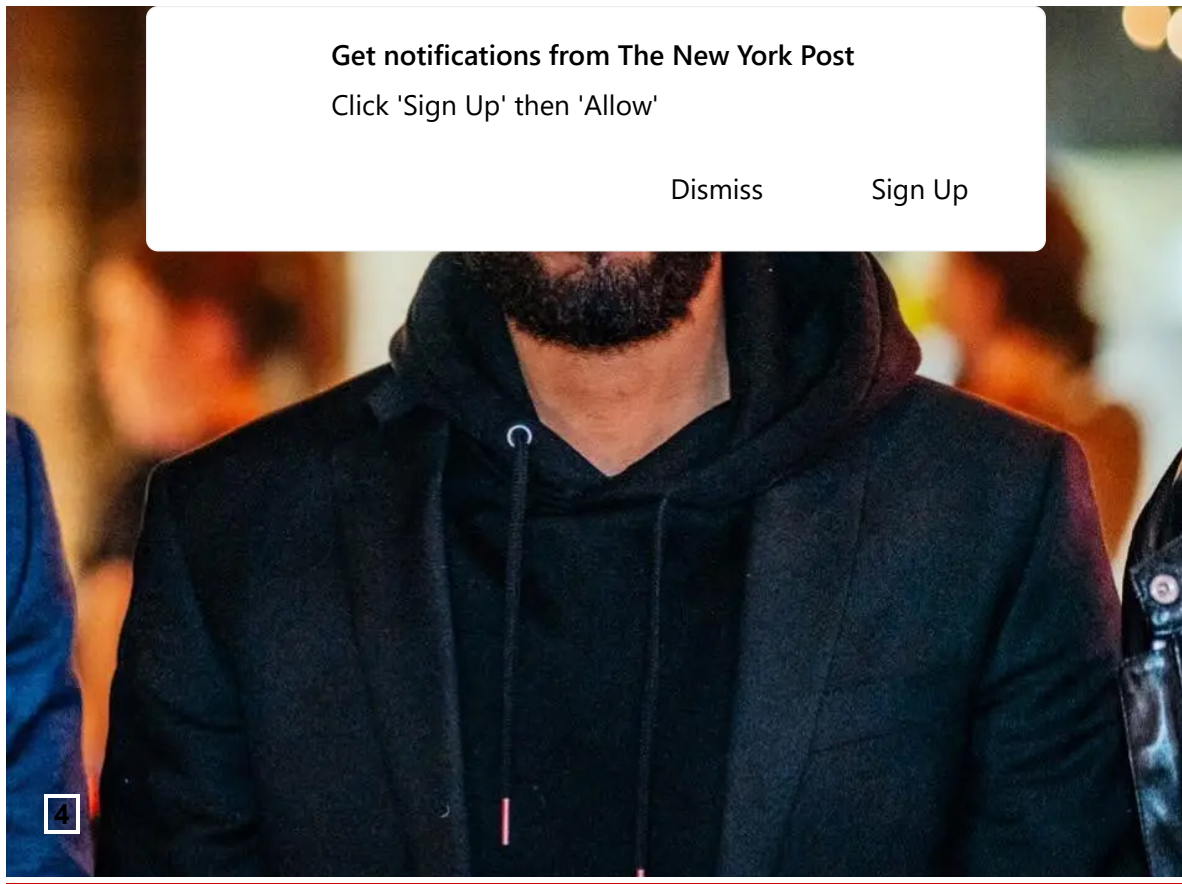
Investigators had been tracking the pay-for-sex con since 2019, prosecutors said.

Sampson and Reeves were busted for reported.

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Elmi, meanwhile, had been championed as a rags-to-riches story of refugee success





The alleged fraudster had started a business “to help inspire other people,” in a now-deleted profile celebrating him as an “outstanding refugee” on the state’s website.

The alleged fraudster had started a business “to help inspire other people” in a since-deleted profile celebrating him as an “outstanding refugee” on the state’s website.

Besides helping to create the bogus businesses used to rip off Medicaid, Elmi was also the founder of Tavolo, an AI marketing app for restaurants.

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Elmi’s partial ownership in Tavolo allow
fake agencies, the National Review rep

He was released from custody on Mon
the state. He’s due back in court on Oc

The arrests come amid an ongoing sca
uncovered billions of dollars in welfare fraud.

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