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**Complaints continue to dog paralegal firm**

[SOUTH PINELLAS Edition]

St. Petersburg Times - St. Petersburg, Fla.

Author: ANITA KUMAR

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**Document Text**

A judge fined the company that sells kits to customers who fill out forms for people filing for divorce or bankruptcy. A judge has fined a Sarasota woman and the paralegal company she founded a total of \$20,000 and has forbidden them from working on bankruptcy cases in South Florida. But customers around the nation continue to accuse Deborah Dolen and AAA Family Centers of fraud. U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Steven Freidman is now considering whether to hold Dolen and the company in contempt of court for not paying the fines - a move that could leave Ms. Dolen in jail and the company facing more sanctions. Dana Watts, AAA's attorney in Sarasota, said he and company officials did not know about the judge's ruling until being contacted by the Times on Thursday even though he acknowledges the paperwork was sent to the company's correct address in Sarasota last month. "It's odd," Watts said. "This is bewildering to me." Ms. Dolen, 36, who admitted being a prostitute and was convicted of using money collected for a charity for crippled children on luxury cars and homes, could not be reached for comment. She resigned from the company Jan. 4 but still is featured prominently on the company's Web site. AAA, affiliated with the independent paralegal organization Para-Link International, continues to do business across the United States, including the southern district of Florida from Vero Beach to Key West. The company sells work-at-home kits to customers who are then able to fill out lengthy forms for people who are filing for divorce or declaring bankruptcy. Diane Benotte, a bankruptcy trustee in South Florida, alerted the judge after she found out that in at least two occasions Ms. Dolen instructed AAA kit buyers to incorrectly fill out bankruptcy forms for clients. The forms were sent by mail and those declaring bankruptcy never talk to an attorney, Benotte said. Michael Bakst, a West Palm Beach attorney representing Benotte, is asking the judge to hold Ms. Dolen and AAA in contempt of court. A hearing to review the request will be held in a few weeks. State investigators say as many as 5,000 people across the country may have bought kits from AAA. At \$345 a kit, AAA appears to make money off kits and not by completing divorce and bankruptcy forms, customers and investigators say. Each kit buyer is paid \$25 for typing a set of forms. Some customers have complained they were not paid, given less work than promised and provided useless or pirated computer programs, said Kevin Jackson of the Attorney General's Office in Tampa. Jackson, who said he continues to receive complaints, said the Attorney General's Office turned over its investigation to the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office. Chuck Lesalato, sheriff's spokesman, said a detective is reviewing the case before deciding whether to investigate. The Florida Bar is looking into whether Ms. Dolen practiced law without a license. Ms. Dolen and the company also face a lawsuit in Pinellas-Pasco Circuit Court. Dissatisfied customer Peter Penrose of St. Petersburg filed a suit last month and is asking a judge to let others join him in a class-action suit.

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