

Chicana Service Action Center executives charged with embezzlement, conspiracy



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The president of Chicana Service Action Center and two top executives were charged with embezzlement and conspiracy in court Wednesday.

LOS ANGELES (KABC) -- The president of Chicana Service Action Center and two top executives were charged with 61 counts of embezzlement and conspiracy in court Wednesday.

Sophia Esparza, Silvia Gutierrez and Thomas Baiz are suspected of operating the nonprofit organization with a sham board of directors and spending \$8.5 million of taxpayers' money over the last 11 years.

Investigators found expenditures for Clippers season tickets, Dodgers season tickets, four cars including a Jaguar purchased in Pasadena and several properties rented with public money.

Gutierrez remains in custody in lieu of \$750,000 bail, while Baiz's and Esparza's bail is \$1.5 million each. Their preliminary hearing is scheduled for July 24.

The headquarters and 12 other locations that were part of the nonprofit have been shut down. Investigators are seizing as many assets as possible to pay back the public.

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