



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE WELFARE INSPECTOR GENERAL

David A. Paterson
Governor

Sean Courtney
Welfare Inspector General

**For Immediate Release
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Bronx woman is arrested for stealing over \$100,000 in public assistance, Medicaid and housing benefits

Defendant concealed her husband's employment with the New York City Housing Authority while they lived in an apartment subsidized by Housing Authority

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Sean Courtney, New York State Welfare Inspector General, announced the arrest of Mrs. Omaira Blalock, a Bronx resident, for defrauding the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) of a total of \$106,432 in public assistance, Medicaid and housing benefits. The defendant is charged in Bronx Criminal Court with: Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony; Welfare Fraud in the Second Degree, a class C felony; Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a class D felony; and eight counts of Offering a False Instrument For Filing in the First Degree, class E felonies. She faces a maximum of fifteen years in prison and restitution of the benefits that she stole.

The Welfare Inspector General's office, with assistance from NYC Department of Investigation's (DOI) Office of the Inspector General for NYCHA, United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Inspector General and HRA's Bureau of Fraud Investigation, found that the defendant stole public benefits for over five years by concealing that she was married and living with her husband, a supervisor employed by NYCHA who earned as much as \$62,000 annually. As a result, while collecting under her married name over \$70,000 in public assistance and medical benefits from HRA, she also collected under her maiden name almost \$35,000 in housing benefits from NYCHA. In fact, investigators found that the defendant was living with her husband who supported her and their family and that the couple lived together since their marriage in 2001.

Inspector General Courtney remarked, “Although Mrs. Blalock signed all the false documents that enabled her to fraudulently collect public benefits, her husband, a City employee, also reaped the benefits. We have referred our findings to his employer, the NYC Housing Authority, for their appropriate action.”

Rose Gill Hearn, DOI Commissioner said, “Someone who steals housing subsidies and other public benefits hurts not only the taxpayers but the people who really need the assistance. Every dollar stolen is one less dollar available to help support an eligible household. DOI is pleased to have worked with colleagues in the State Welfare Inspector General’s Office, HUD, and HRA to uncover this charged fraud, and we thank Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo and his staff for their support in prosecuting the case.”

Rene Febles, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General noted, “Our office is committed to identifying and prosecuting any individual who tries to defraud HUD programs. It is important that only those persons eligible for our programs receive those benefits.”

Alida Mattos, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, HRA stated, “This investigation is an example of HRA’s continuing commitment to pursue fraud and to insure the integrity of our programs.”

The criminal case is being prosecuted through the Office of Andrew M. Cuomo, the New York State Attorney General. The case was principally investigated by Confidential Investigator Gabriel Camacho and Jacqueline McMahon Smith, Special Counsel, of the Welfare Inspector General’s Office with the assistance of Chief Investigator J. Graham Forbes of DOI’s Office of the Inspector General for NYCHA, Special Agent Miguel Collazo of the HUD Office of Inspector General and HRA’s Bureau of Fraud Investigation, including Investigator Bridget Shell, under the supervision of Alida Mattos, Assistant Deputy Commissioner of HRA. The criminal prosecution will be handled by the Inspector General, who is a Special Assistant Attorney General.

The Office of the Welfare Inspector General is a State agency that investigates and prosecutes criminal misconduct in the social services programs of State and local governments. Complaints of misconduct in social services programs may be made directly to the Inspector General’s office at 1-800-682-4530, by e-mail to owig@dfa.state.ny.us or through our website at www.owig.state.ny.us.

Under the law, the complaint filed against the defendant constitutes an accusation only. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven otherwise by a court of law.