



STATE OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE WELFARE INSPECTOR GENERAL

David A. Paterson  
Governor

Sean Courtney  
Welfare Inspector General

For release on May 1, 2009

**New York City Corrections Officer and spouse to pay back almost \$86,000 in public assistance benefits stolen in Westchester County**

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The New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General today announced the arrest of Daisy Cruz, a forty-one year old resident of Yonkers, Westchester County, for the crime of grand larceny in the third degree, in violation of New York State Penal Law section 155.35. Investigators from this office, with investigators from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and the United States Social Security Administration, discovered that Ms. Cruz fraudulently applied for and obtained social services benefits, valued at a total of \$85,967, over a two and one-half year period, from November 2005 until December 2008, by concealing from government officials her marriage—she was married to Frankie Cortes in May 2005—and her husband's income—he was employed during this period as a Corrections Officer by the New York City Department of Corrections. Had Ms. Cruz truthfully reported her husband's income—for example, he earned more than \$100,000 during 2007—she would not have been qualified to receive these benefits.

The agencies defrauded by the defendant were: the Westchester County of Social Services, from which the defendant stole \$33,809 in Medicaid benefits and \$5,199 in food stamp program benefits; the Yonkers Housing Authority, from which she stole \$27,581 in federal Section 8 housing subsidies; and the Social Security Administration's Supplemental Security Income program in the amount of \$19,386.

Although the defendant's husband, Frankie Cortes, who retired last year from the New York City Corrections Department, lived with the defendant and enjoyed the benefit of her criminal misconduct, there was insufficient evidence to file criminal charges directly against him. We have referred the findings of our investigation to the City of New York,

for administrative action against him in the event that he attempts to re-enter the municipal work-force.

The defendant will be required to pay back the full amount of the benefits that she illegally collected. It is anticipated that both the defendant's assets and those of her husband will be attached for this purpose.

The Office of the Inspector General thanks the Office of Janet DiFiore, the District Attorney of Westchester County, whose office is prosecuting the criminal case (and, in particular, Assistant District Attorney Brian Conway, deputy bureau chief in the District Attorney's Public Integrity Bureau); the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General (especially Rene Feebles, special agent-in-charge); and the City of Yonkers Housing Authority.

The Inspector General's investigation was conducted by Investigator Gabriel Camacho, under the supervision of Chief Investigator Anthony Jacaruso.

The criminal charges filed against the defendant constitute accusations only; she is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

The Office of the Welfare Inspector General is a State agency, in the administration of Governor David A. Paterson, charged with prosecuting and investigating fraud and abuse in social services programs throughout New York. The Inspector General invites the public to responsibly report instances of fraud, waste and abuse in social services programs, so that the integrity of these programs may be protected. Please go to our website, <http://owig.state.ny.us>, or call our toll-free telephone number, 800-682-2028.