



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE WELFARE INSPECTOR GENERAL

Catherine Leahy Scott – Acting Welfare Inspector General

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WELFARE INSPECTOR GENERAL: APPROXIMATELY \$100,000 IN WELFARE BENEFITS STOLEN

Defendant claimed no income, even though employed

Acting New York State Welfare Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and New York District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr. announced today the arrest of an out-of-state resident for stealing nearly \$100,000 in public assistance benefits from New York.

Angie Colon, 46, of East Haven, Connecticut, was indicted on one count of Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, one count of Welfare Fraud in the Second Degree, and three counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, all felonies.

“The Defendant manipulated the system in order to steal public benefits meant for New Yorkers in need,” said Acting Welfare Inspector General Scott. “The Defendant both lived outside of New York and was gainfully employed in another state. I will continue to investigate fraud of public assistance benefits programs to ensure that moneys intended to assist the needy are paid only to those entitled to these benefits.”

Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance, Jr., said: “Public benefits fraud burdens our welfare system and deprives families of the essentials to survive and thrive in a city where nearly 20 percent of residents are living below the federal poverty level. In this case, a Connecticut woman is charged with stealing nearly \$100,000 in public assistance intended for deserving New Yorkers. My Office’s Public Assistance Fraud Unit will continue to aggressively investigate and prosecute public benefits fraud to secure our social safety net. I commend and thank our partners at the Office of Acting New York State Welfare Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and Human Resources Administration Commissioner Robert Doar.”

New York State administers multiple public assistance benefits programs intended to help New York citizens in need. The programs impacted by the Defendant’s actions were Medicaid (for New Yorkers who cannot afford medical care), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (which provides benefits to assist low-income New Yorkers feed their families), and Temporary Assistance program (which provides cash assistance for eligible needy New Yorkers and their families).

The Welfare Inspector General's investigation revealed that although Colon had been living in Connecticut for more than 10 years, she collected New York public assistance benefits from 2009 through 2012. Colon filed an application and re-certifications for public assistance benefits utilizing a Manhattan address in which she never lived. Additionally, the Inspector General obtained evidence that since 2010, Colon has had filed for Medicaid benefits in the State of Connecticut.

The investigation also obtained evidence that since 2010, Colon was employed by three companies in the state of Connecticut. Colon allegedly failed to report income from these employers in subsequent applications/re-certifications for welfare benefits filed with New York City's Human Resources Administration (HRA), in spite of being required to do so.

Colon admitted to Welfare Inspector General investigators that she did not live in New York during the time she collected welfare benefits, and that she did not inform HRA about her employment.

As a result of these false filings, Colon received \$83,466.02 in Medicaid benefits, \$10,319.22 from New York's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and \$5,979 from the state's Temporary Assistance program. In all, the Defendant allegedly stole \$99,744.24 of welfare benefits from New York State from August 2009 to February 2012.

Colon was arraigned before the Hon. Ronald A. Zweibel of State Supreme Court. She pleaded not guilty. Bail was set at \$5,000. Her next court date is October 17, 2013.

Acting Welfare Inspector General Scott thanked New York City's HRA Department of Social Services Commissioner Robert Doar and HRA's Bureau of Fraud Investigations for their assistance throughout the Inspector General's investigation. Inspector General Scott also thanked District Attorney Vance and his staff for prosecuting this case.

The Welfare Inspector General's Office has referred its findings to the Connecticut Department of Social Services.

The defendant is innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

The New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General is a State agency responsible to protect the integrity of New York's social/human services programs, benefits and funds. If you are aware of welfare/social service benefit fraud, contact the Welfare Inspector General's fraud hotline at (800) 682-4530, or file an online complaint at <http://www.owig.ny.gov/>.