



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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UTICA CHIROPRACTOR ADMITS TO FAKING MEDICAL EXAMS TO FACILITATE CNY PSYCHIATRIC CENTER EMPLOYEES' BOGUS DISABILITY CLAIMS

Examinations and treatments certifying debilitating work-related injuries were never performed as claimed. Employees received paid time off to which they were not entitled.

SYRACUSE – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the guilty plea of a former Oneida County chiropractor who faked medical examinations and reports to facilitate fraudulent Workers' Compensation claims by employees of the Central New York Psychiatric Center (CNYPC) and getting them paid time off to which they were not entitled.

Eric Szatko, 47, of Sauquoit, who formerly had a chiropractic practice in Utica, pleaded guilty in the City of Utica Court today to the crime of Falsifying Business Records in the Second Degree in full satisfaction of all charges pending against him. As part of Szatko's plea agreement, he surrendered his license to practice as a chiropractor and must pay nearly \$5,000 in restitution for fees he charged an insurance company for bogus appointments as well as for the time the psychiatric center employees were able to take off because of Szatko's fraudulent reports.

"This former chiropractor's medical mill was a shameful malpractice on New York taxpayers who ultimately subsidized illicit paid vacations for public employees feigning work-related injuries," said Inspector General Leahy Scott. "The integrity of the Worker's Compensation system is crucial to protecting honest, hard-working New Yorkers, and I will continue working with all of my law enforcement partners to pursue and root out anyone who corruptly abuses it."

The guilty plea covers Szatko's criminal actions that occurred in early 2016 involving three separate employees of the psychiatric center, including one who was convicted last March of feigning a debilitating injury to obtain paid time off as if he was too injured to work while he was in fact kayaking in Puerto Rico and vacationing with his girlfriend in California. The case against Szatko was part of Inspector General Leahy Scott's long-standing and ongoing investigation into Workers' Compensation fraud in central New York.

An investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found that Szatko, acting as an authorized medical provider for the Workers' Compensation system, submitted to the State Insurance Fund fraudulent medical progress reports indicating he examined and treated psychiatric center employees on several separate occasions in early 2016, when in fact no such examinations or treatments occurred. With those reports, Szatko was also billing for medical services that were not provided.

In one instance, Szatko submitted to CNYPC a medical excuse for Ryan Haley, a former employee who worked

at the facility at that time, to be out of work with pay for two days in February and between March 31 and April 15, 2016 when no examination was performed. Haley was not injured at the time and used the paid time off for a kayaking excursion in Puerto Rico and a trip to California with his girlfriend. Haley was separately prosecuted for Workers' Compensation fraud and pleaded guilty, paid restitution and resigned from State service last March.

Szatko also provided a medical excuse for another CNYPC employee to be out of work with pay for two weeks in February 2016 when the employee had not been examined by Szatko and was not injured at the time. An additional employee received nearly three weeks of paid time off that same February under similar allegations.

The Inspector General's investigation is continuing.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked Oneida County District Attorney Scott D. McNamara and his office for assisting with the investigation and for prosecuting this matter, and the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrest.

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The New York State Office of the Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General investigates fraud, abuse and/or illegal acts against the New York State Workers' Compensation system, including fraud by medical service providers, employers seeking to evade appropriate Workers' Compensation charges, and employees who fabricate injuries to fraudulently receive system benefits. Complaints and referrals are kept confidential. We can be reached by calling toll free: 1-800-367-4448, utilizing our online complaint form at <http://www.ig.ny.gov> or sending an email to: inspector.general@ig.ny.gov. You also can write to our office at: Office of the Workers' Compensation Fraud Inspector General, Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 2, 16th Floor, Albany, New York 12223