



# NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General  
**Catherine Leahy Scott**

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Contact Bill Reynolds: 518-474-1010

## **INSPECTOR GENERAL: NOT-FOR-PROFIT SPENDING OF STATE FUNDS INCONSISTENT WITH GRANT AWARD REQUIREMENTS**

A not-for-profit group receiving in excess of \$600,000 in state grant funds failed to comply with state grant requirements, according to New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott.

State grants were awarded in 2006 and 2008 by New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to a not-for-profit corporation, Correction Officers and Police Supporting Children through Awareness and Reality-based Education, Inc. (COPS CARE). The Inspector General found that COPS CARE did not adequately document expenses or comply with state grant guidelines involving the two grants, which totaled in excess of \$600,000. As a result of these failures, approximately \$348,000 in COPS CARE expenses were identified as improper.

“Recipients of state grants are entrusted with the responsibility to spend these funds prudently, effectively, and in strict compliance with the terms of the grant,” said Inspector General Scott. “My investigation revealed that COPS CARE, while well-intended, violated this trust when it spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant monies without proper management, and outside the scope of the grants.”

The Inspector General found that COPS CARE staff were unaware of rules governing travel reimbursement, and often received more than they were entitled. The not-for-profit’s staff used grant funding for personal mileage reimbursement and to pay for non-COPS CARE expenses. Documentation meant to justify time spent on COPS CARE activities filed by its staff included vague language such as “administrative duties,” with no verifiable information that time was for authorized activities.

In addition, the Inspector General’s investigation found that the Division of Corrections and Community Services (DOCCS) former Commissioner, Brian Fischer, exceeded his authority and violated the State Constitution’s ban on state gifts to private organizations. Fisher unilaterally authorized DOCCS corrections officers leave to do COPS CARE work, without charging leave accruals. As a result, 400 staff days in work time was improperly charged to New York State.

The Inspector General also found that DCJS’s grant monitoring program did not identify problems in the COPS CARE program, which were only identified later by DCJS audit and the Inspector General’s investigation.

As a result of this investigation, COPS CARE, which is no longer operating, reimbursed New York State \$54,689, the total of its remaining assets.

The Inspector General shared her findings with DOCCS and DCJS. DOCCS has since issued a directive that it has discontinued any affiliation with COPS CARE, and advised that any DOCCS employee who wished to continue participating with COPS CARE would have to do so as a civilian, with supervisory

approval, and would have to charge leave credits for COPS CARE activities conducted during work hours.

DCJS has reviewed and revised its grant monitoring procedures to address concerns raised in her report. Revisions include using a detailed checklist for use at all site visits, and incorporating requirements to review time records and other documentation to demonstrate compliance. DCJS has informed the Inspector General that the division is significantly increasing the number of site visits to ensure quality control and compliance.

The Inspector General is providing her report to the state Attorney General's Charities Bureau, which has jurisdiction over COPS CARE as a not-for profit-corporation.

Click [here](#) for a copy of the Inspector General's report.

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