



NEWS RELEASE

Office of the New York State Welfare Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott – Acting Welfare Inspector General

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QUEENS WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY AND PAYS BACK NEARLY \$80,000 IN WELFARE BENEFITS SHE STOLE WHILE SUPPORTED BY COURT OFFICER'S SIX-FIGURE INCOME

QUEENS – New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the guilty plea and restitution payment of a Queens resident who stole nearly \$80,000 in Medicaid and food stamp benefits by intentionally concealing that the father of her two children resided in her household and provided financial support to the family with his six-figure income.

Yessenia Gonzalez, 43, of Linden Boulevard, Queens, pleaded guilty in Queens County Criminal Court to Petit Larceny, a misdemeanor, and repaid the near \$80,000 she fraudulently obtained from public benefits programs.

“With brazen arrogance, this individual concealed a six-figure household income so she could steal nearly \$80,000 in public benefits meant to help New York’s neediest families,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott. “Now, as part of this plea, she is ordered to return the stolen funds so they may appropriately be used to help honest families struggling to make ends meet.”

Inspector General Leahy Scott’s investigation determined that between October 2006 and April 2015, Gonzalez submitted false welfare documentation to the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), failing to disclose, as required, that the father of her children resided with her and provided financial support to the family through his employment as a New York State Court Officer. In addition to his \$70,000 annual State salary, this individual also owned several income producing properties in Queens and Brooklyn during the time period charged in the fraud. The investigation revealed that in 2013 and 2014 alone, he received \$105,000 in rental income from these properties in addition to his State salary.

As a result of her false filings submitted to HRA, Gonzalez improperly obtained \$78,431 in public benefits as follows: \$49,654 in Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (food stamps) benefits, and \$28,777 in Medicaid benefits.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked HRA Commissioner Steven Banks, and his staff for their assistance with the investigation. She also thanked Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown and his staff for prosecuting this case.

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The New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General investigates fraud, abuse or illegal acts committed against public assistance programs designed to help those in need. Our office also investigates complaints about the agencies

and local social services districts who administer social services programs. Complaints and referrals are kept confidential. We can be reached by calling toll free: 1-800-367-4448, utilizing our online complaint form: <http://www.ig.state.ny.gov> or sending an email to: inspector.general@ig.ny.gov. You also can write to our office at: Office of the Welfare Inspector General, Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 2, 16th Floor Albany, New York 12223.