



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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NYS INSPECTOR GENERAL ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL ARRESTS IN SCHEME TO USE STOLEN EBT CARDS FROM MENTAL HEALTH RESIDENTS

New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott announced two more individuals were arraigned today in the case involving the illegal use of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards belonging to residents living in mental health facilities in Syracuse and Dewitt. These individuals are in addition to 11 arrests Inspector General Scott [announced](#) on May 29.

Inspector General Scott, who also serves as New York State's Acting Welfare Inspector General, said: "In the course of my ongoing investigation, two more defendants have been arrested and charged with crimes associated with the deplorable act of using electronic benefits cards from disadvantaged people who did not even know their cards were missing. I will continue to work closely with Onondaga County District Attorney William Fitzpatrick to ensure all 13 defendants in this case are held fully accountable for any criminal misconduct that has occurred."

Inspector General Scott announced that Reita Williams, 62, and Isaiah Williams, 65, of Syracuse were arrested for allegedly making purchases on the cards they obtained from a Therapy Aide for Hutchings Psychiatric Center (HPC) community residences located in the Syracuse area. HPC is part of the New York State Office of Mental Health. Specifically, Reita Williams was charged with six felony counts of Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, one felony count of Misuse of Food Stamps, and one misdemeanor count of Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree. Isaiah Williams was charged with one felony count of Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, one misdemeanor count of Misuse of Food Stamps, and one misdemeanor count of Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree.

On May 29, authorities arrested 11 individuals, including the Therapy Aide, Alphonso Bradshaw, 62, of Syracuse. Bradshaw allegedly stole EBT cards from nine HPC residents in his care and sold them to friends and family for half the value of the benefits on the cards. The Williams are among those who allegedly purchased the cards.

Inspector General Scott's investigation revealed that multiple unlawful purchases were made with these cards in the Syracuse region, and that the HPC residents who owned the EBT cards were completely unaware their cards were being used. The unauthorized charges – which reached \$17,332.90 and included large purchases of items such as crab legs, steak and shrimp – took place between January 2012 and February 2014.

EBT cards are used by the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to deliver SNAP and cash benefits to those who qualify. SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps, and cash benefits are deposited into qualified recipients' electronic benefit accounts. These benefits can be accessed at participating ATM machines and stores throughout New York using an EBT card.

The defendants were arraigned before the Hon. Karen M. Uplinger of Syracuse City Court. Inspector General Scott thanked Onondaga County District Attorney Fitzpatrick and his office for prosecuting these

cases and the Town of Dewitt Police Department for their assistance in the investigation. The defendants are deemed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

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