



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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INSPECTOR GENERAL ANNOUNCES SENTENCING OF STATE EMPLOYEE WHO USED AND SOLD EBT CARDS STOLEN FROM MENTAL HEALTH RESIDENTS

New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott announced the sentencing of a former Therapy Aide for the New York State Office of Mental Health. Alphonso Bradshaw, 63, of Syracuse, having pleaded guilty to Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, a class E felony, and Official Misconduct, was sentenced to six months in jail, five years probation and ordered to pay \$8,666.45 in restitution. He no longer works for the state.

Inspector General Scott, who also serves as New York State's Acting Welfare Inspector General, said: "This individual took advantage of people who were in no position to care for themselves or care for their property – worse, still is the fact that it was his responsibility to be sure their needs were taken care of. My office will continue to ensure that those who abuse their authority for criminal gain will be held accountable."

Onondaga County District Attorney William J. Fitzpatrick, whose office prosecuted the case, said: "Rooting out and aggressively pursuing welfare fraud has been one of my top priorities as District Attorney of Onondaga County. This case was troubling on two levels, first because truly needy individuals who were dependent on public assistance were victimized and second, because those who allegedly stole the cards ripped off taxpayers. We appreciate the investigative work performed by the Inspector General's Office and the assistance of the Dewitt Police Department and the New York State Police in helping to build our case for prosecution."

Bradshaw was charged in June with stealing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards from nine mental health facility residents in his care and sold them for half the value of the benefits on the cards.

The cards were taken from the Hutchings Psychiatric Center (HPC) community residences located in the Syracuse area. HPC is part of the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH).

Multiple unlawful purchases were made with the stolen cards in the Syracuse region; the HPC residents who owned the cards were completely unaware they were being used. The unauthorized charges reached \$17,332.90 and included purchases of crab legs, steak and shrimp.

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.

Bradshaw was sentenced by the Hon. Anthony F. Aloia of Onondaga County Court. Inspector General Scott thanked Onondaga District Attorney Fitzpatrick and his office for the successful prosecution of this case, and OMH for its assistance in the investigation.

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