



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 31, 2014
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INSPECTOR GENERAL'S INVESTIGATION RESULTS IN TIGHTER FINANCIAL CONTROLS AND STRENGTHENED OVERSIGHT OF EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBLE FOR PROCESSING CRIME VICTIM COMPLAINTS

New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott completed an [investigation](#) which found that weak financial controls and lax supervision created an environment that permitted an Office of Victim Services (OVS) employee to process claims and fraudulently obtain money for her family. As a result of the investigation, OVS has strengthened procedures to review and scrutinize claims.

“Adequate review of these claims was sorely lacking,” said Inspector General Scott. “A proper and thorough analysis could have detected and prevented the false and questionable claims filed. I have reviewed the results of my investigation with the current administration of OVS and am pleased the agency has taken the necessary steps to protect the integrity of this important program.”

The Inspector General determined that OVS Agency Service Representative Miriam Brown, 52, of Schenectady inappropriately orchestrated the payment of a \$500 claim to her sister for property losses as a crime victim. She altered the corresponding police report so it would match the claim filed with OVS in January 2011. Additionally, she made false entries into OVS records to conceal her activities and violated agency procedures by actively assisting in filling out the claim. Brown was arrested and prosecuted for her crimes. She resigned her position and made full restitution.

The Inspector General found two other claims filed by Brown's relatives with OVS. One was filed by Brown's husband on behalf of their daughter and stated that clothes were stolen, even though the corresponding police report did not indicate stolen clothes. As a result of this claim, Brown's daughter received \$500 from OVS. The other, filed by Brown's sister on March 2011 and facilitated by Brown, was never paid by OVS because the agency mistakenly deemed the claim duplicative of a previous claim.

The Inspector General determined that OVS's processing of essential personal property claims was grossly inadequate; neither supervisors nor agency counsel reviewed service representative recommendations.

The Inspector General recommended that OVS:

- Fundamentally reform its processing of essential personal property claims to ensure compliance with the law and agency requirements;
- Formalize new property claim processing procedures to ensure that, among other things, claims receive meaningful review by supervisors and the counsel's office;
- Ensure that all staff read and understand the policy;
- Provide training in the new procedures to all appropriate staff; and
- Subject all claims filed by OVS employees, their families, or individuals who reside with OVS employees to heightened scrutiny.

The current administration of OVS has taken corrective action in response to the Inspector General's findings. A copy of the Inspector General's report can be found [here](#).

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