



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General
Letizia Tagliafierro

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 20, 2019
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ADDICTION TREATMENT CENTER PROGRAM DIRECTOR STOLE FOOD STAMPS FROM 46 RESIDENTS FOR A \$9,200 PERSONAL GROCERY SPREE

ALBANY – New York State Inspector General Letizia Tagliafierro and Rensselaer County District Attorney Mary Pat Donnelly today announced the arrest of a Troy residential substance abuse facility’s program director on charges he stole food stamp funding from 46 separate residents under his care and used it for his own personal purchases of nearly \$9,200 in groceries over a 21-month period.

Elwood Powell, 55, of Watervliet, a program director for the substance abuse treatment residential program 820 River Street, Inc., was charged today with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree and Misuse of Food Stamps, all felonies.

An investigation by the Offices of the Inspector General found that between late March 2017 through the end of 2018, Powell stole the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)-regulated Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP – also known as food stamps) Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards belonging to 46 different residents of the program. During that time, the investigation found Powell used the EBT cards to buy his own groceries. Funding for the EBT cards was meant to be used to subsidize the treatment program’s meal costs for the residents. Instead of transferring funds from the EBT cards into the account for the group home – a facility run by Peter Young Housing, Industries and Treatment – Powell used the cards in 146 separate store transactions on personal grocery spending.

Inspector General Tagliafierro said, “This defendant used his position to shamelessly prey upon some of the most vulnerable among us to fund his own personal shopping spree. The Offices of the Inspector General, District Attorney Donnelly, and our law enforcement partners remain committed to pursuing anyone who abuses any funding administered by the State.”

District Attorney Donnelly said, “I commend the efforts of the New York State Offices of the Inspector General in this investigation. SNAP benefits are intended to support our most vulnerable citizens. Misappropriation of these benefits cannot be tolerated. The Rensselaer County District Attorney’s Office looks forward to continued cooperation with the Offices of the Inspector General to bring this important matter to justice. “

Powell was arraigned on the charges in Troy City Court and sent to the Rensselaer County Jail without bail pending his next court appearance on Tuesday, June 25.

Inspector General Tagliafierro thanked the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrest, OTDA for

their assistance with the investigation, and Rensselaer County District Attorney Mary Pat Donnelly and her office for prosecuting this case.

The defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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