



# NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Inspector General  
**Letizia Tagliafierro**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 15, 2019**  
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## **ADDICTION TREATMENT CENTER PROGRAM DIRECTOR ADMITS STEALING FOOD STAMPS FROM RESIDENTS FOR PERSONAL GROCERY PURCHASES TOTALING \$9,200**

ALBANY – New York State Inspector General Letizia Tagliafierro and Rensselaer County District Attorney Mary Pat Donnelly today announced the guilty plea of a Troy residential substance abuse facility’s program director related to charges that he stole food stamp funds from 46 residents under his care and used the funds to purchase groceries for himself totaling almost \$9,200 over an almost 21-month period.

Elwood Powell, 55, of Watervliet, a program director for the substance abuse treatment residential program 820 River Street, Inc., pleaded guilty to Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a felony, and will be sentenced to a term of up to six months in jail followed by five years of probation. Powell also agreed to pay full restitution in the amount of \$9,194.29.

An investigation by the Offices of the New York State Inspector General found that between late March 2017 and the end of 2018, Powell stole Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, also known as food stamps) Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards belonging to 46 residents of the program and used the EBT cards to buy groceries for himself. The SNAP program is regulated in New York State by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). The residents’ EBT card funds were meant to be used to subsidize their meal costs. Instead of transferring funds from the EBT cards to the facility’s account, Powell used the cards to buy himself groceries in 146 separate store transactions.

**Inspector General Tagliafierro** said, “The resolution of this case and the consequences to the perpetrator of this crime sends a clear message that such theft from those most vulnerable New Yorkers will not be tolerated, and the Offices of the New York State Inspector General remain committed to pursuing anyone who commits such abuse.”

**District Attorney Donnelly** said, “This defendant preyed upon the innocent and vulnerable victims he was entrusted to help. Additionally, his crimes also affected every taxpayer in Rensselaer County as well as the State. This plea will ensure that he pays the price for his crimes. I would like to commend the diligent efforts of the New York State Inspector General’s Office and Rensselaer County Chief Assistant District Attorney Matthew Hauf for bringing this defendant to justice.”

Powell is scheduled to reappear in Rensselaer County Court on October 10, 2019, before the Honorable Jennifer Sober.

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