



**Offices of the
Inspector General**

NEWS RELEASE

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 1, 2019
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ORCHARD PARK WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING OVER \$9,000 IN MEDICAID BENEFITS BY FALSIFYING PAPERWORK

BUFFALO - New York State Inspector General Letizia Tagliafierro today announced the guilty plea of an Orchard Park woman who stole \$9,530 in New York State Medicaid benefits by lying about her income when applying for benefits.

Leah Cattarin, a/k/a Leah Smith, 45, of Orchard Park, NY, pleaded guilty to Welfare Fraud in the 5th Degree (A misdemeanor) after lying about her income to become eligible for \$9,529.67 in Medicaid benefits between November 2015 and December 2016. Cattarin repaid the full amount as part of her plea and was sentenced to a one-year conditional discharge.

"We continue to find individuals who file false paperwork in order to game the Medicaid system," said Inspector General Letizia Tagliafierro. "I thank the Erie County Department of Social Services for their vigilance and referring the matter to my office."

An investigation by the Offices of the Inspector General and the Erie County Department of Social Services found that Cattarin repeatedly submitted forged employment letters in 2015 and 2016 to the local social services agency, certifying her need for Medicaid coverage. The submitted records purporting to come from her then-employer claimed a decrease in hours and salary due to seasonal employment, when she was actually working full time. Had she accurately reported the income, she would not have qualified for the coverage.

Inspector General Tagliafierro thanked the Erie County Department of Social Services for their partnership with the investigation, the New York State Police for their assistance with the arrest, and Erie County District Attorney John J. Flynn and his office for prosecuting this case.

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