May 20, 2021

Ann Marie T. Sullivan, M.D.
Commissioner
New York State Office of Mental Health
44 Holland Avenue
Albany, New York 12229

Re: NYS IG 1583-043-2020

Dear Commissioner Sullivan:

On July 1, 2020, the New York State Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) advised the Offices of the New York State Inspector General of possible fraudulent telephone usage at the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) Rockland Psychiatric Center (Rockland PC). Specifically, ITS advised it had discovered that multiple international telephone calls totaling almost $108,000 had been made to Albania in September 2019 from an account at Rockland PC’s clinic at St. John’s Riverside Hospital in Yonkers, New York. This amount caused alarm since the bill for this account generally averages approximately $600 to $1,000 each month.

The Inspector General’s investigation, which included a review of call logs and billing records, identified 18 calls from this Rockland PC account to a telephone number in Albania. The calls were made on Saturday, September 7, 2019 (between 3:37 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.); Monday, September 9, 2019 (between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.); and Wednesday,
September 11, 2019 (at 5 a.m.). The calls originated from an account associated with three telephone numbers at the clinic, and the telephone numbers are assigned to multiple telephones within the clinic.

According to OMH, there are no work-related reasons for international calls from this account, most of which were made during non-business hours. OMH advised that the three clinic telephone numbers are general lines and not assigned to any specific staff member or office. ITS and OMH advised that although the telephone numbers used by the perpetrator(s) to dial out can be identified, the particular telephone that was used within the clinic cannot be determined. Additionally, ITS, working with telephone carrier AT&T, confirmed the calls were not “spoofed”—meaning the caller did not deliberately send false information to a caller ID display to disguise their identity.

The investigation found that the clinic operates Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. After hours, office doors are locked by clinic staff. According to the clinic’s director, each of the approximately ten clinic staff members has a key to the clinic but none would have reason to be there on weekends. No video surveillance is conducted within the clinic, and hospital surveillance recordings are not retained for the period at issue.

The investigation further found that more than 25 hospital employees were scheduled to work on the aforementioned weekend dates and had access to clinic master keys. Moreover, the clinic master keys had been distributed to other authorized hospital staff members over the years and additional copies were made and distributed among hospital staffers without proper oversight.

The Inspector General’s office conducted a walkthrough of the clinic and shared access points with St. John’s Riverside Hospital. The clinic, which is separate from the hospital, can be accessed through a shared stairwell between it and the hospital. The stairwell has a security door with an alarm that sounds when the door is opened. However, the investigation found that the alarm is not very loud and turns off after approximately fifteen seconds.

Due to the many clinic and hospital staff members who have access to clinic or master keys, and lacking other evidence connecting any particular individual(s) to these calls, the Inspector General was unable to determine the perpetrator(s) who made these personal calls to Albania.

ITS advised the Inspector General that international calling has now been disabled for telephones at Rockland PC’s clinic at St. John’s Riverside Hospital in Yonkers. In addition, ITS advised that the charges for the aforementioned telephone calls to Albania have been paid by OMH via ITS after an unsuccessful attempt to dispute the charges with carrier AT&T.

In view of these findings, I recommend that OMH take steps to secure the clinic, which may include changing door locks, maintaining a log of staff assigned clinic and master keys, and ensuring that all such keys are returned when an employee no longer has a business need for a key or separates from State service.
As an overarching recommendation, with the assistance of ITS, OMH should conduct an audit of telephone accounts at its offices and facilities and determine which accounts allow for international telephone calls. Once determined, OMH should review the necessity for the same and disable international calling when appropriate.

Please advise me of the action taken by OMH in response to these recommendations within 45 days of the date of this letter. If you require further information, please contact Deputy Inspector General Jessica Silver at 212.635.3150.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
Letizia Tagliaferro
Inspector General

Cc: J. Mark Noordsy, Esq.
Chief Counsel and Deputy Commissioner
New York State Office of Mental Health

Marcy S. Stevens, Esq.
General Counsel
New York State Office of Information Technology Services
From: Promutico, Marc A (OMH) <Marc.Promutico@omh.ny.gov>
Sent: Monday, August 16, 2021 3:42 PM
To: Leslie Arp <Leslie.Arp@ig.ny.gov>; IG Referral <IG.Referral@ig.ny.gov>
Cc: Honikel, Kevin C (OMH) <Kevin.Honikel@omh.ny.gov>; Danielle Krueger <Danielle.Krueger@ig.ny.gov>
Subject: FW: NYSIG# 1583-043-2020

Inspector General Letizia Tagliafierro
Office of the New York State Inspector General
C/O Chief Investigator Leslie M. Arp

Dear Ms. Arp:

Internal Affairs is in receipt of your May 20, 2021 referral of an New York State Office of Information Services (ITS) of possible fraudulent telephone usage at the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) Rockland Psychiatric Center Rockland PC. Specifically, ITS advised it had discovered that multiple international telephone calls totaling almost $108,000 had been made to Albania in September 2019 from an account at Rockland PC’s clinic at St. John’s Riverside Hospital in Yonkers, New York. This amount caused alarm since the bill for this account generally averages approximately $600 to $1,000 each month.

The Inspector General’s investigation, which included a review of call logs and billing records, identified 18 calls from this Rockland PC account to a telephone number in Albania. The calls were made on Saturday, September 7, 2019 (between 3:37 a.m. and 9:30 a.m.); Monday, September 9, 2019 (between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.); and Wednesday, September 11, 2019 (at 5 a.m.). The calls originated from an account associated with three telephone numbers at the clinic, and the telephone numbers are assigned to multiple telephones with the clinic.

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The investigation found that the clinic operates Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. After hours, office doors are locked by clinic staff. According to the clinic’s director, each of the approximately ten clinic staff members has a key to the clinic but none would have reason to be there on weekends.

The investigation further found that more than 25 hospital employees were scheduled to work on the aforementioned weekend dates and had access to clinic master keys. Moreover, the clinic master keys had been distrusted to other authorized hospital staff members over the years and additional copies were made and distributed among hospital staffers without proper oversight.

The Inspector General’s office conducted a walkthrough of the clinic and shared access points with St. John’s Riverside Hospital. The clinic, which is separate from the hospital, can be accessed through a shared stairwell between it and the hospital. The stairwell has a security door with an alarm that sounds when the door is opened. However, the investigation found that

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In view of the findings, the Inspector General’s office recommended that OMH take steps to secure the clinic, which may include changing door locks, maintain a log of staff assigned clinic and master keys, and ensuring that all such keys are returned when an employee no longer has a business need for a key or separates from State service.

The Inspector General also recommended, with the assistance of ITS, OMH should conduct an audit of telephone accounts at its offices and facilities and determine which accounts allow for international telephone calls. Once determined, OMH should review the necessity for the same and disable international calling when appropriate.

After receiving this referral, Internal Affairs contacted [redacted], Deputy Director of Administration for the Rockland Psychiatric Center and provided him a copy of this referral. [redacted] advised that he had a phone meeting with St. Joseph Hospital in regards to the international calling incidents at the Yonkers Clinic. In attendance on the call was [redacted], Associate Vice President St. Joseph Hospital, [redacted], Assistant Director Facility Support Services and [redacted]. They are completing a plan to enhance the security of the clinic during off hours and still give all the support services they must supply which include, housekeeping, maintenance and security. At their cost, they will change all door locks in the clinic [redacted]. These two rooms they cannot have keys to due to the nature of their identity.
contents. All of OMH staff will receive the new key. For all St. Joseph staff that will need to gain entry into any room/office, they will need to get the key from a computerized lock box. The staff member, whether it’s a housekeeper, maintenance staff or a security officer, they will need to go to this lock box and put their information into the system, including reason why they took key, to gain access to this key. The information shows up in their safety office telling them the staff member, day/time and reason why they took key. The key will need to be returned to the lock box when their task is completed in the clinic. They believe they will have this completed in the coming weeks.

Also, did receive some new information about the phone system. The phone person stated that the outside lines that are used is not part of the hospital’s phone system. OMH has a trunk line that comes into their facility and is for the clinic only. does not believe that changes anything other than we now know we have our own outside phone lines in their phone closet. And he advised that only the phone system service person has this key.

advised of an update on the Yonkers Clinic security issue. The locks were changed to the doors that were agreed upon by the clinic administration and . All of OMH staff have the key they need to the new lock. Anyone else needing to enter the clinic off hours will need to go to the hospital security’s computerized lock box and enter their information to get the key. This information is shared with their safety dept, so we can find out who went in our area on the date and times the hospital staff member had the key. The staff member then needs to return the key to the lock box. Also, the phone room containing OMH outside lines is on their key system and only their phone person has the key.

Additionally, according to ITS, the phone numbers in question, #, # and # are considered to be mobile phones and they have been disabled pending this investigation.

This case is ongoing. Internal Affairs will update the Inspector General regarding the status of this case by September 15, 2021.

Very Truly Yours,

Marc A. Promutico
Director of Internal Affairs
Chief of Investigations
Feeling stressed by the COVID-19 pandemic? You are not alone. Call the NY Project Hope Emotional Support Helpline 7 days a week, 8am-10pm at 1-844-863-9314 or visit https://nyprojecthope.org

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