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June 11, 2013

Kristen M. Woodlock
Acting Commissioner
New York State Office of Mental Health
44 Holland Avenue
Albany, New York 12229

RE: NYSIG 1641-318-2012

Dear Acting Commissioner Woodlock:

On September 20, 2012, the Inspector General received allegations from the Office of Mental Health (OMH) regarding Hope House 1, a residential transition program located on the campus of Creedmoor Psychiatric Center housing clients with dual diagnoses of mental retardation and mental illness. OMH contracts with Transitional Service for New York Inc. (TSI), a not-for-profit mental health corporation, to operate Hope House and certifies it as a provider. As such, TSI employees are not considered state employees. The primary allegation, which the Inspector General substantiated, involved a cook at the facility who was allegedly stealing clients' food stamp cards and using them for his own benefit. The Inspector General found the other allegations to be unsubstantiated.

The Inspector General's investigation revealed that TSI fired the employee in question after an internal investigation prompted by an OMH visit to the facility regarding this same issue. The Inspector General reviewed TSI's internal investigation and deemed it satisfactory; in addition to terminating the employment of the staff member in question, TSI determined that a policy to secure and manage the use of food stamp cards needed to be developed at its facilities.

The Inspector General's investigation further uncovered that TSI conducted its investigation and terminated the staff member without informing OMH, contrary to OMH policy. OMH, however, properly reported the incident to the Inspector General after receiving an anonymous complaint. OMH regulations require that a crime, or what appears to be a crime, involving a client be reported to OMH through an incident report

system. TSI neglected to do so in this instance. Had TSI properly reported the incident, the terminated employee would have been entered into an OMH database to prevent his hiring at another facility. As such, the Inspector General recommends that OMH reiterate to TSI the parameters of its reporting requirements and provide a copy of the notification and response to the Inspector General. In addition, OMH should require TSI to file a formal incident report regarding this matter so that this former employee will be entered into the database, and inquire into the status of TSI's food stamp management policy.

Within 45 days, please provide information concerning OMH's review and actions, including revisions to any of TSI's policies and procedures. If you require further information about our investigation, please contact Special Deputy Inspector General Philip F. Foglia at (212) 635-3150.

Sincerely,



Catherine Leahy Scott
Inspector General