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**LETIZIA TAGLIAFIERRO**  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

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 [REDACTED]. The

[REDACTED].  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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.

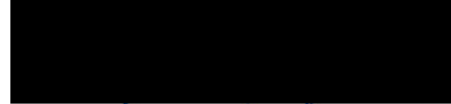
ITS advised the Inspector General that international calling has now been disabled for telephones at Rockland PC’s clinic at St. John’s Riverside Hospital in Yonkers. In addition, ITS advised that the charges for the aforementioned telephone calls to Albania have been paid by OMH via ITS after an unsuccessful 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,



Letizia Tagliafierro  
Inspector General

Cc: J. Mark Noordsy, Esq.  
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