



LUCY LANG
Inspector General

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October 31, 2023

James V. McDonald, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner
New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12237

Re: NYSIG 0408-012-2023

Dear Commissioner McDonald:

On February 14, 2023, the New York State Department of Health (DOH) alleged to the Offices of the New York State Inspector General that DOH employee [REDACTED] a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at the Bureau of Immunizations and Epidemiology, applied for an all-expenses paid sponsorship for her four-year-old daughter to attend a conference in Utah that [REDACTED] would also be attending. According to the complaint, the application for the sponsorship was associated with a DOH email address for [REDACTED] daughter, who is not a DOH employee, and no such email address exists. The following is a summary of the Inspector General's investigation and findings stemming from this allegation.

On January 31, 2023, [REDACTED] and her daughter were awarded sponsorships to attend the June 2023 Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) Influenza Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. Each sponsorship, which covers airfare, lodging, meals, and conference registration, was valued at approximately \$3,200. DOH was alerted to the awards when it was copied on CSTE emails to the awardees, which included a fictitious DOH email address in the name of [REDACTED] daughter. [REDACTED] advised the Inspector General that she did not intentionally apply for a sponsorship under her daughter's name.

The Inspector General reviewed CSTE records reflecting [REDACTED] conference application history. The records revealed that [REDACTED] initially applied online to attend a conference workshop on the morning of January 4, 2023, using her personal information. Later that evening, [REDACTED] submitted another online application for a second conference workshop.¹ This second application was identical to the first application, including using [REDACTED] email address, except the registration was in the name of [REDACTED] daughter. As speculated by [REDACTED] her

¹ Conference attendees may attend more than one conference workshop.

computer might have auto-filled the registrant name from its cached memory, inserting the name of her daughter rather than [REDACTED] name.

CSTE's records also revealed that CSTE, and not [REDACTED] was responsible for the creation of the fictitious email address. They show that on January 10, 2023, a CSTE conference organizer changed the email address associated with this second application from [REDACTED] DOH email address to that of [REDACTED] daughter using the "first name.last name" format of DOH emails. Moreover, CSTE's director of infectious disease programs confirmed with the Inspector General that a CSTE employee was responsible for creating a DOH email address in [REDACTED] daughter's name and that no application was ever submitted by [REDACTED] using that email address. CSTE further advised it has revoked the sponsorship awarded in [REDACTED] daughter's name.

Given that no evidence was found that [REDACTED] intentionally submitted the sponsorship application in her daughter's name, I am referring the findings of this investigation to DOH for its review. This office will be taking no further action on this matter at this time.

If you require further information, please contact Deputy Inspector General James R. Davis at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lucy Lang".

Lucy Lang
Inspector General

cc: Kathy S. Marks, Esq.
General Counsel

Danielle Rysedorph, Esq.
Deputy Director, Bureau of Litigation