OFFICE: INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (IDOE)

TITLE: IDOE THEFT

CASE ID: 2016-06-0117

DATE: September 2, 2016

Inspector General Staff Attorney, Chelsea Smith, after an investigation by the Director of Investigations, Darrell Boehmer, reports as follows:

On June 14, 2016, the Indiana Department of Education ("IDOE") contacted the Office of the Inspector General ("OIG") regarding an allegation that an IDOE employee ("the Employee") misappropriated state funds. Specifically, the Employee allegedly collected funds that she was to pay to Jug's Catering ("Jug's") for providing catering services at an IDOE event, but she failed to pay the invoice. IDOE terminated the Employee.

The OIG is authorized by Ind. Code § 4-2-7-3 to receive complaints alleging criminal violations and to conduct an investigation. OIG Director of Investigations, Darrell Boehmer, conducted the investigation into this allegation.

The Employee was an Outreach Specialist for IDOE at the time of the alleged theft and had worked at IDOE since August 6, 2013. As an Outreach Specialist, the Employee was responsible for helping schools deal with disproportionality by providing additional resources and delivering professional development assistance to the lowest performing school districts. Between the date of the alleged theft and her termination, IDOE promoted the Employee to the position of School Climate and Culture Coordinator.
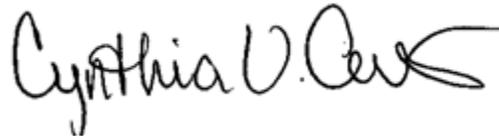
Through his investigation, Director Boehmer determined that the Employee was assisting with a professional development event ("the Event") hosted by IDOE at Perry Meridian High School on July 16, 2015. The Employee hired Jug's to provide lunch during the Event. Each registrant was to pay for his or her meal in cash, which was collected by IDOE staff, and then IDOE was to turn the funds over to Jug's at the end of the meal. The Employee was responsible for collecting the funds and paying Jug's for its services. According to Jug's, IDOE staff did not turn the funds over on the day of the Event. Based on the cost per person and the number of meals served, the amount of the cash collected at the Event should have totaled $2,130.00.

Director Boehmer interviewed several individuals including the owner of Jug's, the Jug's Director of Sales, the Employee's supervisor, and several other IDOE employees. Based on these interviews, he determined that: (1) the Employee was present at the Event and assisted with collection of the funds; (2) the Employee was responsible for paying the caterer after she collected the funds at the Event; (3) the Employee did not pay the caterer on the date of the Event; (4) Jug's contacted the Employee in October 2015 regarding the unpaid invoice for the Event; (5) the Employee made arrangements with Jug's to pay the invoice herself on November 3, 2015; (6) the Employee did not pay the invoice on November 3, 2015; (7) Jug's eventually contacted a different IDOE employee to request payment on the invoice; (8) when IDOE staff questioned the Employee about why the invoice was not paid, she gave conflicting explanations, stating that she thought she had paid the invoice, and also that she went to Jug's the day after the Event and paid the invoice because Jug's would not accept the cash payment at the Event; (9) the Employee was unable to produce a receipt for payment and instead presented the invoice from Jug's dated July 17, 2015; and (10) Jug's stated that no one attempted to provide payment at the Event and that a cash payment would have been acceptable on the day of the Event.

Director Boehmer presented the results of this investigation to the Marion County Prosecutor's Office, and the Prosecutor's Office charged the Employee with Theft, a level 6 felony. Accordingly, this investigation is closed.

Dated: September 2, 2016

APPROVED BY:

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Cynthia V. Carrasco, Inspector General