



# INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

David Cook, Inspector General

OFFICE: INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES (DCS)  
TITLE: DCS EMPLOYEE CRIMINAL ACTIVITY  
CASE ID: 2021-09-0263  
DATE: May 26, 2022

*Inspector General Staff Attorney Mark Mader, after an investigation by Special Agent Michael Lepper, reports as follows:*

The Indiana General Assembly charged the Office of the Indiana Inspector General (OIG) with addressing fraud, waste, abuse and wrongdoing in the executive branch agencies of state government. Ind. Code §4-2-7-2(b). The OIG also investigates criminal activity and ethics violations by state workers. Ind. Code §4-2-7-3. The OIG may recommend policies and carry out other activities designed to deter, detect and eradicate fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement and misconduct in state government. Ind. Code §4-2-7-3(2).

## **I. Complaint and Background**

On September 8, 2021, the OIG received a complaint alleging that former DCS employee Jerika J. Bland (Bland) engaged in ghost employment. It also alleged that she falsified records in DCS's Management Gateway for Indiana Kids (MaGIK), which is the automated case filing system DCS uses to document activities related to DCS cases and assessments. Bland served as a Family Case Manager (FCM) in Allen County.

The OIG learned that DCS terminated Bland on September 2, 2021, for violating DCS's Code of Conduct. DCS requires FCMs to record all actions they take on a case in MaGIK. DCS makes FCMs aware during training that falsifying entries in MaGIK or in reports sent to the courts can be grounds for termination and criminal prosecution. DCS supervisors and juvenile court judges rely on the assigned

FCM to give them complete, accurate and unbiased information in a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) case so they can make appropriate decisions regarding the proper care, custody and treatment for minor children.

## **II. OIG Investigation**

Special Agent Michael Lepper investigated this matter. Special Agent Lepper obtained and reviewed documentation of Bland's termination from DCS. He also reviewed additional information received from DCS, including court reports, court entries and case notes that Bland submitted in MaGIK. Special Agent Lepper interviewed Bland, other DCS employees, four caregivers (foster parents) of eight foster children on Bland's caseload and service providers.

Special Agent Lepper's investigation determined that Bland falsified multiple face-to-face visits entered in MaGIK based on his interviews of the children's foster parents, review of DCS records and Allen County court reports. He also found that Bland listed some of the falsified face-to-face visits in reports Bland signed and filed with the Court. The falsified face-to-face visits occurred with the foster children on various dates between January of 2021 and August of 2021.

For one family, which included two children, Bland reported two face-to-face home visits that the children's caregiver said never happened. Bland reported those visits occurred on July 1, 2021, and July 29, 2021. The children's caregiver said that Bland had not been at her home since June 2021. Bland signed and submitted a progress report to the Allen County Juvenile Court on August 23, 2021, listing both of those false visits.

For a second family, which included two children, Bland reported three face-to-face home visits that the children's caregivers said never happened. Bland reported those visits occurred on April 6, 2021; June 1, 2021; and July 1, 2021.

For a third family, which included one child, Bland reported four face-to-face home visits that the child's caregiver said never happened. Bland reported those visits occurred on May 20, 2021; June 18, 2021; July 16, 2021; and August 16, 2021. The child's caregiver said that Bland had not been at his home for a visit since March of 2021. On August 19, 2021, Bland signed and submitted a progress report to the Allen County Juvenile Court listing two of those false visits: June 18, 2021, and July 16, 2021.

For a fourth family, which included three children, Bland reported five face-to-face home visits that the children's caregiver said never happened. Bland reported those visits occurred on February 5, 2021; March 5, 2021; May 21, 2021; July 19, 2021; and August 17, 2021. The children's caregiver said that Bland had only been to her home twice, once when she took over the case in January of 2021, and again in June of 2021. On April 1, 2021, Bland signed and submitted a progress report to the Allen County Juvenile Court listing two of the false visits: February 5, 2021, and March 5, 2021.

After speaking with four caregivers about visits Bland claimed in her MaGIK entries, Special Agent Lepper determined that Bland submitted as many as fourteen false reports in MaGIK. In addition, Special Agent Lepper found there were three progress reports that Bland filed with the Allen County Juvenile Court that listed false visits.

During a voluntary, non-custodial interview with Special Agent Lepper, Bland denied falsifying MaGIK entries regarding face-to-face visits with foster children. Bland admitted to Special Agent Lepper that some of the dates and locations of her MaGIK entries were inaccurate.

Special Agent Lepper found credible evidence to substantiate allegations that Bland falsified DCS records, in violation of Ind. Code §31-33-22-2, a class A misdemeanor, and therefore, also engaged in Official Misconduct in violation of Ind. Code §35-44.1-1-1. Special Agent Lepper also found credible evidence to substantiate Obstruction of Justice allegations in violation of Ind. Code §35-44.1-2-2(a)(4)

for Bland's insertion of false visits in Progress Reports that Bland signed and filed with the Court. Special Agent Lepper found insufficient evidence to substantiate DCS allegations of ghost employment.

### **III. Conclusion**

The OIG submitted the results of the investigation to the Allen County Prosecutor's Office on March 17, 2022. On May 23, 2022, the Allen County Prosecutor's Office charged Bland with three counts of Obstruction of Justice, a Level 6 Felony; and one count of Official Misconduct, a Level 6 Felony; in Cause Number 02D06-2205-F6-000598. The OIG acknowledges criminal charges are merely allegations, and individuals are considered innocent until proven guilty.

Accordingly, this investigation is closed.

Dated: May 26, 2022

APPROVED BY:



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David A Cook, Inspector General