



PRELIMINARY INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT

2005-06-0303

December 29, 2006

MARION COUNTY PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FRAUD - 5

Inspector General David O. Thomas, after an investigation by Special Agent Alan McElroy and Staff Attorney Amanda Schaeffer, reports as follows:

This report addresses the arrest of defendant Yvette Dennis, criminally charged with the felony of welfare fraud on May 9, 2006, as a result of an Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigation of Family of Social Services Administration (FSSA) Caseworkers Geraldine Harper and Mary Miracle. Both Harper and Miracle, as well as a Stephanie Russell, were charged and convicted of welfare fraud as a result of the initial OIG investigation. The investigation was then expanded, resulting in this additional arrest.

Public assistance benefits are usually distributed through an Electronic Benefits Transaction (EBT) card. FSSA caseworkers, such as Harper and Miracle, supervise the issuance and maintenance of these EBT cards. This EBT card is similar to an ATM card in that the welfare recipient may withdraw cash

from automatic teller bank machines. One of the benefits in issuing public assistance through EBT cards is that the cash withdrawal transactions are captured by the computer for later investigative purposes.

In this case, Yvette Dennis was a friend of Geraldine Harper and received and used a fraudulent EBT card. Dennis was interviewed by OIG Special Agent McElroy on June 23, 2005. Dennis stated that she has attended the same church as Harper for about ten years and that she is employed at the Citizen's Gas Company of Indianapolis. Dennis admitted in her interview to receiving an EBT card from Harper. Dennis could not or would not state whose name was on the card and stated Harper had given her the public assistance card to her as a gift on the occasion of the graduation of Dennis's son. Dennis felt she had done nothing wrong, but used the public assistance card to buy food and party supplies for her son's graduation party in the amount of about \$200, using the card the week before the party on Saturday, May 21, 2005. Harper then sent Dennis an email asking her to return the card on May 25, 2005. Dennis stated in the interview that she responded by leaving the card for Harper at the receptionist's desk at the local FSSA office.

Charges remain pending at the time of this report.

Dated this 29th day of December, 2006.



David O. Thomas, Inspector General