



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

DANIEL G. CORT  
ACTING COMMISSIONER

180 MAIDEN LANE  
NEW YORK, NY 10038  
212-825-5900

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**CONTACT: DIANE STRUZZI**  
**(212) 825-5931**

### **DOI ISSUES 2021 CALENDAR YEAR-END STATISTICS**

Daniel G. Cort, Acting Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced today the agency’s statistics for Calendar Year-end (“CY”) 2021, which covers January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. The 2021 numbers continue to reflect the pandemic’s effect on the City and its economy, as well as on the courts and criminal justice system. As a result, some of the numbers reflect a downturn from the previous calendar year. However, statistics are only one measure of DOI’s broad impact. As the investigations detailed below demonstrate, DOI’s anti-corruption work has wide-ranging impact throughout the City, rooting out corruption and holding accountable those who seek to undermine the City. DOI’s work advanced the agency’s mission through educational efforts, public reports, and public corruption investigations that got results despite pandemic hurdles.

Acting DOI Commissioner Daniel G. Cort said, “Calendar Year 2021 reflects DOI’s determination in the face of continuing challenges presented by the pandemic, many beyond DOI’s control. Statistics are only one facet of DOI’s story last year. The real depth of DOI’s work can be found in the details of the cases we did in 2021 and the impact they made, including stopping bribery from taking hold in City contracting processes, issuing public reports that provided the facts of investigations and presented recommendations to fix flawed and damaging City policies, and holding accountable individuals who use wrongdoing to steal from the City and manipulate City operations. The array of investigations described below demonstrate how DOI’s anti-corruption work touches on all aspects of City government and furthers public confidence in how the City is run.”

Specifically, in CY 2021, DOI:

- Made 288 arrests resulting from investigations, a drop of 14% from CY 2020, when DOI made 333 arrests.
- Carried a docket of 1,524 investigations, about 9% fewer than the 1,677 caseload the agency carried in CY 2020.
- Closed 838 investigations; an 18% decrease from the 1,024 investigations closed in CY 2020.
- Issued 201 policy and procedure recommendations compared to 366 recommendations issued in CY 2020.
- Received 12,144 complaints, a 12% increase from the 10,883 complaints received in CY 2020.
- Reached more than 25,000 City employees with its online corruption-prevention module, an increase of 55% from CY 2020; conducted 83 corruption-prevention lectures, a 4% increase from CY 2020.
- Continued to reduce the agency’s background investigation backlog, which in the summer of 2019 had reached approximately 6,500 investigations. During CY 2021, DOI closed more than 1,800 investigations in the backlog, decreasing it to just under 1,850 cases. In CY 2022, DOI has continued that effort, further decreasing the backlog to under 1,800 investigations.

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Below are highlights from Calendar Year 2021, reflecting the broad impact of DOI's corruption investigations – from providing detailed reforms to improving oversight of City funding to nonprofits that serve the most vulnerable in the City, to arrests of individuals charged with corruption-related crimes and reports that expose the facts of wrongdoing involving fraud, mismanagement, and other abuses. To view more on each matter mentioned below, click on the headline or the designated link in the text:

### **DOI REPORTS AND INITIATIVES**

Issuing public reports that shine a light on wrongdoing and how government operations can be improved is part of DOI's anti-corruption mission. In CY 2021, DOI issued seven public reports, including:

- **[Corruption Vulnerabilities in the City's Oversight and Administration of Nonprofit Human Services Contracts](#)**  
DOI examined how the City can strengthen the budgeting, invoicing, and auditing of the nonprofit human service contracts it awards, and which in Fiscal Year 2020 expended more than \$4 billion in City funds. The Report also drew on DOI's observations from the dozens of investigations it has conducted into corruption, waste, fraud, and other abuse involving these outsourced human service contracts that deliver a variety of vital services. DOI issued a series of detailed recommendations to implement standard procedures across the City intended to close those corruption vulnerabilities found during this examination.
- **[Probe into Misuse of the former Mayor's Security Detail](#)**  
DOI probed four allegations involving the misuse of former Mayor Bill de Blasio's security detail, two involving the former Mayor's children, one involving his mayoral staff and a fourth about whether New York City bore ancillary travel costs for the former Mayor's security detail during his presidential campaign. The Report detailed DOI's findings, context on best practices for the provision of executive protection and issued 13 recommendations, three to the New York City Police Department ("NYPD"), seven to the Office of the Mayor, two to the Conflicts of Interest Board and one to the City Department of Records and Information Services.
- **[Mismanagement and Leadership Failures in the Lifeguard Division](#)**  
DOI's investigation found that the structure, history, and culture of the Lifeguard Division within the City Department of Parks and Recreation revealed systemic dysfunction in its management and accountability. The Report detailed the causes for these failures and provided 13 recommendations for reform, urging the City to act on its recommendations and address the longstanding issues within the Lifeguard Division that have undermined the professional management of lifeguards in the City.
- **[Absentee Ballot Report](#)**  
DOI investigated defective absentee ballots produced by Rochester, New York-based Phoenix Graphics, Inc. for the 2020 General Election in New York City. DOI found no evidence that there was intentional interference regarding the defective absentee ballot packages and that while there was no competitive bid process to procure the contract, the award was consistent with emergency procurement authority granted to the Board of Elections.
- **[Sharing Police Body-Worn Camera \("BWC"\) Footage in New York City](#)**  
This Report examined how the NYPD's BWC footage is used by five agencies in New York City that oversee and monitor police accountability. The examination determined that each agency has different procedures for requesting, accessing, and retaining NYPD BWC footage for their mandated activities and the current procedures do not provide the Civilian Complaint Review Board ("CCRB") with the appropriate level of access needed to perform its respective duties. While CCRB and NYPD have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding that has the potential to improve the exchange of BWC footage between the two agencies, the MOU does not grant direct access. In fact, this examination found that if CCRB had direct access to NYPD's BWC footage system, as many police review agencies do in other cities, CCRB would be able to conduct its investigations in a timelier manner that would also reduce the compliance burdens on NYPD.

- **Anti-Corruption Report**  
The 2020 Anti-Corruption Report was a progress report on City agencies' anti-corruption programs, which includes the vulnerabilities agencies have self-identified as problems and the strategies they are using to remedy them; and was the first to be publicly issued. The annual report is different than most other DOI reports in that it is not the product of DOI's investigative work, but instead provides a broad overview of the approach City agencies are taking to fight corruption.
- **Public Information Campaign**  
In October 2021, DOI launched a poster and radio campaign that urged City employees and the public to call DOI if they have information about corruption involving City government. The 2021 campaign built upon DOI's successful poster campaign from the 1990s – "Get the Worms Out of the Big Apple" – and updated it by asking New Yorkers for their help to root out corruption: "Know something rotten in City government? Help DOI Get the Worms Out of the Big Apple." Radio spots focused on different corruption scenarios that DOI investigates and appeared on the radio during the month of October.

## **DOI INVESTIGATIONS**

Investigations by DOI may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. Highlighted below are an array of investigations publicly announced in 2021 that reflects this broad mandate:

### **Investigations involving the City's Jails**

- DOI partnered with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office on an investigation that culminated in [the indictment of a Department of Correction \("DOC"\) Captain on charges of criminally negligent homicide and offering a false instrument for filing](#) in connection with issuing orders that prevented officers from saving an inmate's life at the Manhattan Detention Complex and making false statements in her written account of the incident. The indictment is among the first of its kind in the City, where a uniformed correction supervisor was indicted in the death of an inmate.
- Stopping the flow of contraband into the City's jails led to a number of arrests in 2021. DOI worked together with the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") on [an investigation that led to charges against nine current and former DOC employees and correction officers for taking cash bribes in return for smuggling contraband](#) such as scalpels, razor blades, drugs, alcohol and cellphones to inmates in City jails. Separately, DOI worked with DOC on an [operation that led to the arrest of a City Correction Officer and inmate on promoting prison contraband charges](#). The investigation was prompted by an alert DOC Assistant Deputy Warden who saw an exchange between a correction officer and inmate and ordered a search that led to a recovery of a single-edge razor blade. DOC alerted DOI and the two agencies worked the investigation in partnership.

### **Construction-Related Misconduct and Shoring Up Safety**

- [A Staten Island landlord was charged with submitting a falsified lead paint abatement certification](#) to the City Department of Housing Preservation and Development ("HPD"), the agency tasked with issuing housing violations for lead-based paint conditions. DOI worked the matter with the Richmond County District Attorney's Office. The defendant pleaded guilty to Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree, a class A misdemeanor, and was ordered to pay a \$500 fine. In a separate investigation, DOI worked with the state Attorney General's Office on a matter that led to [the indictment of four asbestos investigators](#), who were independent contractors, on charges of filing fraudulent inspection reports on days when they were out of the state or country.
- A DOI investigation, in partnership with the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, led to the [indictment on manslaughter and other charges of a Flatbush landlord who rented out rooms in an illegally subdivided apartment](#) where there was a fatal fire. In a separate matter, DOI worked with multiple agencies, including the City Department of Buildings and the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office on an investigation that [led to the indictment of an unlicensed contractor and grocery store owner](#) in connection with an incident in which a vendor died while attempting to use an illegally installed makeshift elevator.
- Working with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office as part of the Construction Fraud Task Force, [DOI helped recover more than \\$100,000 in stolen wages for 18 electrical workers](#) who performed work on a construction site in Midtown Manhattan.
- [Two unlicensed Brooklyn contractors and their company were charged with grand larceny and scheme to defraud](#) for fraudulently representing they were licensed plumbers and allegedly taking \$93,000 from five customers to perform work they never completed.

## **Bribery and Fraud**

- New York City Housing Authority (“NYCHA”) workers embraced the obligation by all City employees to notify DOI about corruption matters and reported allegations of bribe offers by contractors. These employees’ willingness to step forward prompted an undercover investigation by DOI that ultimately led to [the indictment of nine contractors who allegedly bribed NYCHA superintendents to obtain micro-purchase contracts](#). This investigation exemplifies the valuable tool that New York City has in mandating that its City employees report corruption to DOI.
- [Three Brooklyn shopkeepers were charged with bribery](#) for allegedly offering winnings from a valuable Super Bowl box to a City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”) official in exchange for warning them about impending inspections. The investigation began when a DOHMH employee notified DOI about a bribery attempt. DOI then sent in an undercover investigator who posed as the DOHMH employee to discuss the scheme, according to the charges.
- [A landscaping company that was contracted by the City to conduct sidewalk and road repair was indicted for \\$1 million insurance fraud](#) and charged with misclassifying workers on its applications to the New York State Insurance Fund in order to evade insurance premiums.
- DOI worked with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York, and the Office of Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Labor on an investigation that resulted in [four defendants being charged with abusing the City’s COVID-19 hotel room isolation program](#) by falsely claiming to be healthcare workers and selling hotel rooms to ineligible individuals, defrauding the government of \$400,000.
- [Seven Taxi and Limousine-licensed taxicab drivers pleaded guilty to defrauding passengers](#) by overcharging on toll rates that did not account for the E-ZPass discount required by City Taxi & Limousine Commission regulations and/or charging passengers for tolls when none should have been charged. DOI partnered with the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office on this matter.
- A DOI investigation led to [the arrest of a supervisor with the City Human Resources Administration \(“HRA”\) and a Brooklyn resident in connection with stealing funds from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) in which the defendants were charged with defrauding the program of approximately \$22,000 in public funds.

## **Public Corruption and Theft**

- A DOI investigation led to the arrest of the [Director of Contracts at the City Health + Hospitals \(“H+H”\) on charges of stealing \\$64,000 from Health + Hospitals](#) and filing several false bank statements to DOI during its investigation.
- A DOI investigation into an illegal eviction by a City employee led to [the arrest of a Construction Project Manager with HPD](#) on charges of owning a Brooklyn property in which the cellar was illegally converted into an apartment; and endangering the welfare of a tenant who resided there. The Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office prosecuted the case. The defendant pleaded guilty to Reckless Endangerment in the Second Degree, a class A misdemeanor, and related administrative code violations. She was ordered to pay a \$250 fine and associated costs.
- DOI worked with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York and the Internal Revenue Service on an investigation that resulted in [the conviction and sentencing of a former City Councilmember on a tax fraud charge](#).
- An investigation into the CEO of a City-funded nonprofit that provided homeless shelters, affordable housing and other services led to [the arrest of the CEO in a bribery and kickbacks scheme](#) on charges that he enriched himself and his relatives by soliciting and accepting bribes and kickbacks from contractors doing work for the nonprofit, according to the Information.
- [Two Queens residents were charged with grand larceny, defrauding the government and other crimes](#) for allegedly stealing thousands of dollars intended for participants in a City-funded summer youth employment program. DOI investigated in partnership with the Queens County District Attorney’s Office.
- [Nine therapists were arrested in connection with stealing more than \\$3 million from the New York State Early Intervention Program](#), including more than \$993,000 from Medicaid and nearly \$2 million from DOHMH. DOI investigated with the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York and the FBI.
- In partnership with the state Attorney General’s Office, DOI announced [the arrest and indictment involving a \\$15 million bid-rigging scheme that defrauded public benefits programs](#), in which defendants submitted thousands of false and inflated bids to government agencies for services intended to help domestic violence survivors and other victims of crime.
- Two former mortuary technicians with the City Office of Chief Medical Examiner were [charged with stealing credit and debit cards that belonged to decedents whose bodies were in their care](#)

[and custody](#), and making thousands of dollars of unauthorized purchases. DOI investigated with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York and the FBI.

- DOI worked with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York and the FBI on an investigation that led to [the indictment of an individual for his role in a scheme to misrepresent and conceal the sources of political campaign contributions](#) to the campaign of a candidate for City Comptroller during the 2021 election cycle.

### **Rent Schemes that Preyed on New Yorkers in Need of Housing**

- Two defendants, including an employee with HRA, were [charged in a scam that stole \\$1,500 from a New Yorker on the verge of homelessness](#).
- A Queens man was [charged with defrauding government rental assistance programs by renting out dilapidated apartments](#) he did not own to families in need. The investigation was conducted in partnership with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.
- Working with the Bronx District Attorney's Office, DOI investigated a matter that led to the [indictment of a Bronx woman on charges of stealing nearly \\$20,000 from eight people](#) in a scheme promising affordable apartments. And, in a separate investigation, DOI worked with the Bronx District Attorney's Office on an investigation that led to [the indictment of a Bronx woman on charges of stealing approximately \\$99,000 from 16 people](#) in a scheme promising rent-stabilized apartments to low-income individuals.

### **DOI's OUTREACH EFFORTS (Updated on Monday, March 7, 2022)**

In CY 2021, DOI capped its outreach efforts with a poster and radio public information campaign that urged City employees and New Yorkers to report corruption to DOI and is described in more detail earlier in this release. Other outreach activities continued through corruption prevention lectures and a digital learning module for City employees that focused on DOI's mission and City employees' obligation to report corruption. DOI's digital learning module reached approximately 25,355 staff within the City, 55% more than in the prior calendar year. DOI conducted 83 in-person and webinar lectures, a slight 4% increase from CY 2021.

### **COMPLAINTS AND INTAKES (Updated on Monday, March 7, 2022)**

Complaints come into DOI from the City's 311 help line, or complainants may contact an Inspector General unit directly, or they may contact DOI's Complaint Intake Unit, our public-facing unit devoted to receiving complaints from the public. In CY 2021, the Complaint Intake Unit received communications from the public through various mechanisms, including: 366 complaints processed through 311; 1,654 complaints rerouted from other City agencies; 274 complaints received via mail; 2,141 complaints received via DOI's online complaint system; and 2,755 calls to the Complaint Intake Unit.

Indictments and criminal complaints are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

*DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country and New York City's corruption watchdog. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City. DOI's strategy attacks corruption comprehensively through systemic investigations that lead to high-impact arrests, preventive internal controls and operational reforms that improve the way the City runs.*

DOI's press releases can also be found at [twitter.com/NYC\\_DOI](https://twitter.com/NYC_DOI)  
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