



The City of New York
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**DOI STATEMENT ON GUILTY PLEA OF VETERAN HRA EMPLOYEE
IN MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR FOOD STAMP FRAUD**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), issued the following statement on today's guilty plea of VANEE SYKES, an employee of the City Human Resources Administration ("HRA"), for her role in a \$7 million food stamp fraud ring. SYKES, 44, of Brooklyn, pleaded guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge Kevin N. Fox to the federal offenses of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and theft concerning programs receiving federal funds. SYKES is the fourth and final defendant to plead guilty in this case: Alice Bradford, 50, of Brooklyn; Lois Johnson, 57, of Staten Island; and Tori Jackson, 34, of Brooklyn have each pleaded guilty and await sentencing. SYKES will be sentenced at a later date. The office of Preet Bharara, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, prosecuted the case.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "This defendant abused her City position to become the ringleader of a multimillion-dollar food stamp fraud, churning out more than 1,000 fake food stamp cases and pocketing taxpayer funds. With her guilty plea, she is now a convicted felon and faces possible prison time, the fourth and last defendant in this case. These convictions are a warning to City employees and others who use the public coffers as if they were a personal ATM: investigators will shut down the corruption and individuals will be held accountable. DOI thanks the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York for its partnership in exposing and prosecuting individuals who seek to pilfer public funds intended for some of the neediest in our City."

SYKES has been employed with HRA since July 1989 and receives approximately \$59,047 annually as an Associate Job Opportunity Specialist. Upon her arrest, HRA removed SYKES from client contact and prohibited her access to HRA client databases. With today's guilty plea, HRA will proceed administratively to terminate SYKES.

DOI's investigation stemmed from a report by an HRA employee who noticed irregularities in HRA's processing of food stamp applications.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara and HRA Commissioner Robert Doar and their staffs for their assistance in the case.

DOI's Office of Inspector General for HRA investigated the case.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul M. Krieger prosecuted the case, under the supervision of Assistant U.S. Attorney Brendan McGuire, Chief of the Public Corruption Unit in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. 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.

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