



Department of Investigation

Press Release

Release #017-2001

THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2001

DOI ARRESTS BROOKLYN WOMAN IN \$51,000 WELFARE FRAUD
-- Received Public Assistance For 5 Years While Husband Was City HRA Employee --

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of ROSIE MCKNIGHT-WHEELER, a Brooklyn resident, for unlawfully receiving over \$51,000 in public assistance from 1995 - 2000 while her husband was employed full-time as a City Human Resources Administration (HRA) clerk.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, DOI began an investigation when HRA referred an allegation that MCKNIGHT-WHEELER was residing in Brooklyn with her husband, a City employee, and illegally receiving government benefits.

The investigation disclosed that, in February 1995, MCKNIGHT-WHEELER applied for public assistance for herself and the couple's 3 children at HRA's Clinton Job Center in Brooklyn. In her application MCKNIGHT-WHEELER claimed that she and her family received no income from private employment and that she did not know her husband's whereabouts. In fact, her husband was employed as a clerk at HRA's Brownsville Job Center and lived with her and their 3 children in an apartment at 450 Putnam Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant.

The investigation further revealed that, between February 1995 and July 2000, MCKNIGHT-WHEELER submitted to HRA 6 public assistance re-certification forms and 1 absent parent form, all of which failed to disclose her husband's City employment, income, and presence in the Putnam Avenue household. In addition, MCKNIGHT-WHEELER gave to her HRA caseworker 6 bogus letters between January 25, 1995, and July 2, 1999, purportedly written by her landlord, falsely stating that she and her 3 children were the sole occupants of the Putnam Avenue apartment. By not reporting her husband's employment, income, and presence in the household--which would have made her ineligible for public assistance--MCKNIGHT-WHEELER fraudulently received, over a 66-month period between February 1995 and July 2000, welfare benefits totaling \$51,578, or about \$780 monthly.

DOI investigators also learned that MCKNIGHT-WHEELER's husband was hired by HRA in October 1976, that the couple was married on March 31, 1981, that he is currently employed as a clerical associate earning \$23,607 a year, and that, during the entire period of the alleged fraud, he continuously resided at the family's Putnam Avenue apartment while maintaining his employment with HRA.

MCKNIGHT-WHEELER, 45, has been charged with Grand Larceny in the Second Degree and Welfare Fraud in the Second Degree, both Class C felonies, and with 7 counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing

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in the First Degree, a class E felony. If convicted, she faces up to 15 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to HRA Commissioner Jason R. Turner and members of his staff for their cooperation and assistance in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Gerard Hoey, DOI's Inspector General for HRA, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Benjamin Defibaugh and Confidential Investigator Nanci Chalkin.

The Office of the Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorneys Lauren Mack, Bureau Chief of the DA's Public Assistance Crimes Unit, and Soo-Young Chang are handling the matter.