



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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HRA CASEWORKER CHARGED IN \$29K WELFARE & RENT FRAUD

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation, and CHARLES J. HYNES, the Brooklyn District Attorney, today announced the felony arrest and indictment of EMILY DUNCAN, a City Human Resources Administration (HRA) caseworker, for unlawfully receiving public assistance and rent subsidies totaling \$29,550 while working full-time as an HRA caseworker, and, previously, as a private-sector association counselor.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky and DA Hynes, the investigation began when HRA's Bureau of Fraud Investigation referred an anonymous complaint to DOI that DUNCAN was fraudulently collecting welfare benefits while employed by the City.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Inspector General's Office (HUD/OIG) joined the investigation when DOI learned that DUNCAN was also receiving rent subsidies from HUD's Section 8 program, a federally-funded, leased-housing program, administered by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), which provides government rent subsidies to nearly 75,000 needy families living in privately-owned dwellings.

The investigation disclosed that DUNCAN, in January 1996, began receiving public assistance after submitting an application for welfare benefits at HRA's Queens Job Center in Long Island City. In March 1998, while still receiving public assistance, DUNCAN moved to a Section 8, 3-bedroom apartment at 260-280 Herkimer Street in Brooklyn, and her case was transferred to HRA's Dekalb Job Center, also in Brooklyn.

The investigation further revealed that DUNCAN, in November 1998, obtained employment with the Association for the Advancement of Blind and Retarded, Inc.(AABR), in Manhattan as a direct care counselor at an annual salary of \$17,000. DUNCAN remained employed at AABR until January 3, 2000, when she resigned to become an HRA caseworker at an annual salary of \$27,265. HRA subsequently assigned DUNCAN to its Office of Employment Services at the Rider Job Center in the Bronx, where her responsibilities included assisting welfare recipients to obtain job training and employment.

According to the 13-count indictment, DUNCAN filed 3 tenant certification forms with HUD, between March 1999 and March 2001, in which she failed to disclose her employment and actual income. Specifically, DUNCAN was charged with concealing from both HRA and HUD, between November 1998 and March 2001, her employment and income as an AABR counselor and later as an HRA caseworker, thereby fraudulently receiving government benefits totaling \$29,550--namely, HRA welfare benefits totaling \$22,304,

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and HUD rent subsidies totaling \$7,246. DUNCAN allegedly claimed that her total household income ranged from \$18,684 to \$20,868 a year and was solely derived from public assistance and social security disability payments for 2 of her children, while her employers' payroll records indicated that she had actually earned income from them totaling \$53,195 during that period. Between 1998 and this past March, DUNCAN's rent share ranged from \$367 to \$474 a month, while HUD paid rent subsidies ranging from \$224 to \$331 a month. In fact, DUNCAN should have paid a rent share ranging from \$470 to \$689 a month.

DUNCAN, 42, currently earning \$29,619 a year at HRA, has been suspended without pay. She has been charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree, both Class D felonies; Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, Welfare Fraud in the Fourth Degree, and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, all Class E felonies; and Welfare Fraud in the Fifth Degree and Issuing a False Financial Statement, both Class A misdemeanors. If convicted, she faces up to 7 years in prison.

The investigation, under the direction of Gerard Hoey, DOI's Inspector General for HRA, and Ruth Ritzema, Special Agent-in-Charge of HUD/OIG, was conducted by DOI Deputy Inspector General Benjamin Defibaugh and Confidential Investigator Nanci Chalkin, and Special Agent Martin Sullivan of HUD/OIG.

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