



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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DOI Arrest Pennsylvania Woman In \$22,500 Welfare Fraud *-Her 4 Children Attend Private School-*

Release Date -- TUESDAY, JULY 11, 2000

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the felony arrest of SONIA FALET, a Pennsylvania resident, for unlawfully receiving, between 1996 and 1999, more than \$22,500 in public assistance benefits from New York City while actually living in Pennsylvania.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, DOI began an investigation after receiving a complaint from the City Human Resources Administration (HRA) alleging that FALET and her 4 children may be residing in Pennsylvania but, at the same time, collecting welfare benefits from the Dyckman Job Center in upper Manhattan.

The investigation disclosed that in September 1991, FALET, then residing at 570 West 189th Street, began receiving public assistance benefits for herself and 4 children at the Dyckman Job Center. In September 1996, while still receiving welfare benefits from HRA, FALET left New York and became a resident of Milford County in Pennsylvania. FALET, her husband, and 4 children currently reside at Conashaugh Lake, a Pennsylvania lakeside community near Port Jervis, New York. Her 4 daughters, aged 8 to 15, all attend private parochial schools either in Port Jervis or in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania.

The investigation further revealed that FALET, while residing in Pennsylvania, continued to collect welfare benefits through December 1999, when her case was finally closed due to her repeated failure to meet with the HRA Eligibility Verification and Review (EVR) unit to discuss her residency. The unit assists in determining a client's eligibility to receive welfare benefits by checking personal information provided by the recipient, including the home address.

FALET, on at least 2 separate occasions, allegedly submitted false recertification forms to HRA in which she continued to list her residence as 570 West 189th Street, which is actually the address of her father's apartment. In addition, FALET provided her HRA caseworker with bogus school letters falsely indicating that her 4 children attended a nearby parochial school in Wayne, New Jersey.

FALET, 38, of Pennsylvania, has been charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and Welfare Fraud in the Third Degree, both Class D felonies, and 2 counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a Class E felony. If convicted, she faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to HRA Commissioner Jason A. Turner and members of his staff for their assistance and cooperation 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 Mauricio Kasianko.

The Office of the Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Melissa Bristol Paoletta is handling the matter.