



Department of Investigation

Press Release

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BROOKLYN DAY CARE OPERATOR ARRESTED IN BRIBERY "STING"

EDWARD J. KURIANSKY, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), today announced the arrest of BELLA KOTOW, a Brooklyn day care operator, for unlawfully making 2 cash payoffs totaling \$600--\$100 to a City Department of Health (DOH) public health sanitarian and \$500 to a DOI undercover posing as a DOH inspector. The payoffs were allegedly made to ensure that the day care center would not receive any health or safety violations, including a violation for having an unauthorized number of children in the facility.

According to Commissioner Kuriansky, an investigation began in May 2001 when a DOH sanitarian notified DOI that a Brooklyn day care provider, on May 24, 2001, had placed \$100 cash in her backpack so she would not issue a violation to the home for having an unauthorized number of children on the premises.

In response, DOI set up a "sting" operation, and, thereafter, on June 29, 2001, sent an investigator, posing as a DOH inspector and wearing a concealed recording device, to meet the day care provider. The operator, KOTOW, allegedly gave \$500 to the undercover to ensure that the undercover would not issue a summons for the presence in the facility of 8 children, who were observed in the living room and a bedroom of the single-family house in Sea Gate.

The investigation disclosed that the home, which had opened last year, was awaiting a permit to operate from DOH, and, pending issuance of a permit, was limited to an enrollment of 2 children.

KOTOW, 46, of 4342 Manhattan Avenue, Sea Gate, Brooklyn, was charged with Bribery in the Third Degree, a Class D felony, and Criminal Solicitation in the Fourth Degree, a Class A misdemeanor. If convicted, she faces up to 7 years in prison.

Commissioner Kuriansky expressed his sincere appreciation to DOH Commissioner Dr. Neal L. Cohen, M.D., and members of his staff, for their cooperation and assistance in the investigation.

The investigation was conducted by Kyle S. Sturcken, Inspector General for DOH, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Stephan Zander, Special Investigator Bradley Howard, and Confidential Investigators Stacey Hernandez and Byron Biggerstaff.

The Office of Brooklyn District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case. Assistant District Attorney Dennis Ring is handling the matter.

