



Department of Investigation

Press Release

U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Eastern District of New York

	<i>One Pierrepont Plaza Brooklyn, New York 11201</i>
<i>Mailing Address:</i>	<i>147 Pierrepont Street Brooklyn, New York 11201</i>
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contacts:	
Linda Thornton United States Attorney's Office (718) 254-6266	
Carol Strickland New York City Department of Investigation (212) 825-5931	
Stephen Delgiacco New York State Office of Inspector General (518) 474-1010	

PRESS RELEASE

NEW YORK STATE COUNSELOR CHARGED IN \$217,000 "NO-SHOW" SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND WELFARE FRAUD SCHEME

ALAN VINEGRAD, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, **EDWARD J. KURIANSKY**, Commissioner, New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), and **ROSLYNN R. MAUSKOPF**, Inspector General for the New York State Office of the Inspector General ("OSIG") today announced the arrest on federal charges of DEE JOYNER, a Youth Division Aide for the New York State Office of Children and Family Services ("OCFS"), for stealing more than \$217,000 in public assistance benefits and funds from a summer youth employment program.

According to the complaint which was unsealed today in the United States District Court in Brooklyn, DOI began an investigation in January 2000 when it received information that a New York City youth was sent a \$50 bonus check by the City Department of Employment ("DOE"), purportedly for his participation in 1999 in a 7-week City Summer Youth Employment Program ("SYEP") for which he was recruited by JOYNER. JOYNER

falsely promised that she would help find the youth a job. JOYNER never did find him a job placement in SYEP that summer, and, in fact, the youth never worked at any SYEP work sites during 1999. Shortly after DOI commenced the investigation, OSIG joined the inquiry because of JOYNER's possible involvement, and the fact that she was a New York State employee.

SYEP, now known as the Youth Employment Program, is a federally funded program administered locally by DOE and provides part-time paid work experience, job counseling, and support services to thousands of disadvantaged City teenage youths. The youths are paid minimum wage -- earning as much as \$800 -- to perform clerical and administrative work, 4 days a week, for the duration of the 7-week program.

Since June 1978, JOYNER has been employed as a Youth Division Aide for OCFS, the lead agency responsible for delinquency prevention and rehabilitation services for at-risk youths. From 1993 to 2000, JOYNER was assigned to the Brooklyn Residential Center ("BRC") located at 1125 Carroll Street in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. BRC is a 24-bed, lockdown facility for teenage females adjudicated as juvenile delinquents. JOYNER was responsible for the safety and supervision of all BRC residents, as well as the overall operation of SYEP at the BRC facility.

Between 400 to 700 SYEP positions are allocated by DOE to OCFS each year, and OCFS, in turn, allocates 24 of these slots to BRC each year. According to OCFS policy, the SYEP slots allocated to OCFS must be offered to, and filled by, OCFS youths who are either residing in a State lockdown facility, or participating in a State-mandated after-care program. Youths residing in a lockdown facility, such as BRC, are provided work opportunities in the facility in which they reside. The after-care program youths are placed with a not-for-profit entity or governmental agency throughout the City.

According to the complaint, JOYNER cashed 150 SYEP checks, totaling \$33,000 and made payable to 59 New York City youths, between 1996 and 1999. These youths, many of whom were recruited by JOYNER and included 18 males, neither worked in SYEP nor received any of the proceeds from JOYNER.

The complaint further alleges that JOYNER cashed these checks at JP Morgan Chase Bank, located at 1000 Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn. JOYNER provided bank officials with the checks, purportedly endorsed by the payees, along with the youths' SYEP identification cards. JOYNER falsely explained to bank officials that the youths to whom the checks were made payable were unable to cash their checks because they were confined to New York State lockdown facilities.

The investigation also revealed that JOYNER, between 1978 and 1999 and while employed by the State, fraudulently received more than \$184,000 in public assistance, food stamps, and other related benefits to which she was not entitled. JOYNER applied for, and began receiving, public assistance benefits in 1974 using the name "Teresa Sims," and a fictitious Social Security number. The complaint alleges that JOYNER unlawfully increased the amount of public assistance benefits she received by falsely claiming that she had five dependent children and by providing her HRA caseworkers with at least three phony birth certificates for these alleged dependants. JOYNER continued to receive public assistance at HRA's Linden Job Center in Brooklyn until September 1998, when her case was closed for failing to appear for a welfare-to-work recertification appointment. Finally, in 1999 JOYNER received two welfare payments, retroactive to 1998. At no time during the period that she was receiving public assistance benefits did JOYNER disclose her employment or income to HRA.

JOYNER, who was most recently earning \$38,000 a year at OCFS, has been suspended from her employment there. I convicted of the charges in the complaint, JOYNER faces a maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and \$217,000 in restitution.⁽¹⁾

In announcing the charges and arrest, **MR. VINEGRAD** stated, "For over 20 years, DEE DEE JOYNER, a state employee, has ripped off the city welfare system, stealing \$184,000 through phony documents and lies. To make matters worse, over the last several years, JOYNER defrauded yet another city program -- this one, for summer youth employment -- by cashing \$33,000 worth of checks for 'youths' who never participated in the program. The federal, state and local governments, working together, will vigorously prosecute this outrageous betrayal of the public trust."

COMMISSIONER KURIANSKY stated, "Instead of putting troubled teens into worthwhile summer jobs, JOYNER simply put the money meant for them into her own pocket. And to enrich herself even further, she concocted a phony family and led a double-life on the dole for more than two decades. It is a rare but shameful occurrence when a public servant evinces at once such gross greed and callous cynicism."

INSPECTOR GENERAL MAUSKOPF stated, "Any theft of government funds by a state employee is an egregious breach of the public trust. Such conduct is particularly unconscionable when, as in this case, the theft deprives at-risk youth of the opportunity to build a foundation for a productive future."

The joint investigation leading to today's charges was conducted by Gerard F. Hoey, DOI's Inspector General for both HRA and DOE, Chief Deputy Inspector General Daniel Brownell and Deputy Inspector General Dennis Martin, both of the OSIG, and members of their respective staffs, including DOI Examining Attorney Seth Gordon, DOI Confidential Investigator Celestino Martinez and OSIG Senior Investigators Meredith Gizzi and Christopher Rommeney.

The defendant was arraigned today before United States Magistrate Judge Viktor V. Pohorelsky at the United States Courthouse in Brooklyn, New York, and released on a \$150,000 bond.

The government's case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jodi Avergun and Patricia A. Pileggi.

The Defendant:

DEE DEE JOYNER

Age: 51

Residence: Brooklyn, New York

1. The charges contained in the complaint are merely allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.