



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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DOI ARRESTS TWO BROOKLYN WOMEN CHARGED IN UNLAWFUL SALE OF A SECTION 8 VOUCHER

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation ("DOI"), announced the arrest of two women charged in connection with the unlawful sale, alteration and submission to the New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA") of a falsified Section 8 housing voucher. DOI began its investigation after NYCHA reported that a voucher it had previously issued to one defendant was submitted in altered form by the other. Because of DOI's investigation, no Section 8 subsidies were paid on the falsified voucher. The office of Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "Public housing subsidies, while in great demand, are not commodities to be traded. DOI, District Attorney Hynes's office, and NYCHA are jointly committed to defeating any criminal tampering with the Section 8 program."

FRANCES GOVAN, 45, and PENELOPE HOWARD, 40, both of Brooklyn, were arrested Thursday, April 29, 2010.

GOVAN, a NYCHA Section 8 recipient, is charged with Conspiracy in the Fifth Degree, a class A misdemeanor; and Conspiracy in the Sixth Degree, a class B misdemeanor. Upon conviction, a class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year's incarceration and a class B misdemeanor is punishable by up to three months incarceration.

PENELOPE HOWARD is charged with Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, a class D felony; Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, class E felony; Attempted Welfare Fraud in the Fourth Degree, Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Third Degree and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree, class A misdemeanors; and Attempted Welfare Fraud in the Fifth Degree, a class B misdemeanor. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison and a class E felony is punishable by up to four years in prison. HOWARD has been a job training participant at the City Department of Sanitation since March 2009 and is an hourly employee who earned \$15,290 in 2009.

According to the criminal complaints, in November 2009, HOWARD submitted an apparently altered Section 8 housing voucher in her name to NYCHA's Brooklyn office in an attempt to obtain Section 8 benefits. The voucher appeared to have been altered in that the original typewritten number and expiration dates had been changed with ink pen and, according to NYCHA records, the original voucher had been issued to GOVAN. The value of the voucher exceeded \$1,000 per month, and HOWARD did not have permission or authority to possess it. DOI's investigation found that GOVAN illegally sold the voucher to HOWARD in exchange for money.

The Section 8 Housing Assistance Program assists low-income families in obtaining housing at prices they can afford. Individuals apply to NYCHA and, if accepted, are issued vouchers in accordance with the regulations set by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Applicants typically must wait years to obtain a Section 8 voucher, and NYCHA has not accepted applications since 2007 due to a waiting list. A Section 8 voucher holder rents an apartment from a private landlord, and NYCHA pays rent subsidies to the landlord. Vouchers may not be transferred from the recipients to any other individuals.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn thanked Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes and NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea and their staffs for their assistance in the investigation.

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The investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of Inspector General for NYCHA, including Inspector General Kelvin Jeremiah, Senior Deputy Inspector General Ralph Iannuzzi, Assistant Inspector General Suzanne Vitti, and Chief Investigators Stephen Mattei and John Reatz.

The office of Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes is prosecuting the case.

Criminal complaints are accusations. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

DOI is one of the oldest law-enforcement agencies in the country. The agency investigates and refers for prosecution City employees and contractors engaged in corrupt or fraudulent activities or unethical conduct. Investigations may involve any agency, officer, elected official or employee of the City, as well as those who do business with or receive benefits from the City.

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