



NEWS

From the Office of the New York State Inspector General
Joseph Fisch

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State Employees Arrested for Breaching Confidential Child Abuse Register

The New York State Inspector General announced the arrest of three employees accused of illegally accessing confidential child abuse files to get information for personal use.

The employees of the state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) allegedly pulled the confidential data while at work. OCFS operates the State Central Register, which contains legally-protected data from telephone hotline calls alleging child abuse or maltreatment in New York. They face charges of computer trespass, a felony, and official misconduct and improperly disclosing State Central Register files, both misdemeanors.

One employee, James Plante, 46, of Troy, resigned after investigators found he copied a hotline file and gave it to an acquaintance, who used it to stalk a 14-year-old girl because he believed she was his daughter. The acquaintance is being prosecuted separately. Plante is a 23-year state employee has worked for OCFS since 2006.

Also charged were:

- Yvonne Lawson, 53, of Menands, a nine-year state employee and OCFS Children & Family Services Specialist earning \$50,984. Lawson is accused of using the State Central Register to look up her estranged husband in search of incriminating information.
- Megan Flom-Corkrey, 48, of Nassau, an OCFS Children & Family Services Specialist and 23-year employee earning \$71,732 per year,

looked up information about a juvenile and a social worker in an ongoing family problem.

They were arrested by investigators from the Inspector General's Office and the New York State Police. The cases will be prosecuted by the Rensselaer County District Attorney. Two other employees have been slated for departmental discipline for similar behavior.

"Confidentiality is at the core of the state's prevention and prosecution of child abuse," Inspector General Joseph Fisch said. "When the employees entrusted with protecting our citizens violate that trust, the system's credibility is placed at risk. Today's arrests should make it absolutely clear that such conduct cannot and will not be tolerated."

All three employees had approval to access the Register to view cases that were assigned to them, but not to any others, investigators said. Lawson and Flom-Corkrey are now on administrative leave.

OCFS Commissioner Gladys Carrion stated: "There are over 30,000 users of the Statewide Central Register who respect the law and the confidentiality of the children and families in the system; if this trust is broken, the hotline will not continue to be an effective tool for preventing child abuse in New York State. To protect the effectiveness of this system, OCFS has an extremely aggressive, award-winning cyber security program. I am extremely pleased with how expeditiously the State Inspector General, the District Attorney, and the State Police have handled these cases. Today's action will send out the message that these abuses will not be tolerated and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Inspector General Joseph Fisch said his office will continue to investigate potential vulnerabilities involving the State Central Register. The two-month investigation began when OCFS reported the confidentiality breaches to the Inspector General, after the victims notified officials.

Megan Flom-Corkrey



Yvonne Lawson



James Plante

