



NEWS

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

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DOH Starts Discipline Against Three Managers

*Inspector General Issues Report on
Erin Sherman-Rohl Embezzlement Case*

New York State Inspector General Joseph Fisch has concluded that poor oversight by the state Department of Health (DOH) enabled Erin Sherman-Rohl to embezzle more than \$62,000 in funds earmarked for critically ill patients. In a report issued today, Fisch criticized the "lack of internal review" by supervisors over the claims Sherman-Rohl processed for the Adult Cystic Fibrosis Assistance Program.

Sherman-Rohl, 34, of West Sand Lake, Rensselaer County, pleaded guilty to grand larceny in Albany County Court September 3 for stealing more than 10 percent of the cystic fibrosis program's annual budget with a friend, Sheldon Jacobson, 51, of Schenectady County. To do so, Sherman-Rohl created phony patient claims for Jacobson and approved 18 payments from April 2007 to July 2008. Jacobson then cashed the checks and split the money with Sherman-Rohl. Both owed tens of thousands of dollars in personal and credit card debt and Sherman-Rohl admitted that she calculated the fraudulent claim amounts based on how much money she owed at the time.

"This was a contemptible crime that should have been detected," Inspector General Joseph Fisch said.

Jacobson also pleaded guilty to grand larceny and was sentenced September 11 in Albany County Court to 1 to 3 years in prison. Sherman-Rohl faces up to 1 1/3 to 4 years in prison at her sentencing currently scheduled for October.

Sherman-Rohl processed claims for Health Research Inc. in Menands, which is affiliated with DOH. The scam began to unravel in September 2008 when DOH's document control unit questioned the validity of Jacobson's "claims." A co-worker then found a wedding picture of Sherman-Rohl on Jacobson's MySpace page, along with photos of Jacobson smoking cigarettes, which is verboten for cystic fibrosis sufferers who battle the chronic lung disease. Sherman-Rohl's crimes were exposed just before she left Health Research Inc. for a job at the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

Until that time, however, the Inspector General found, DOH supervisors failed to monitor program finances, despite warning signals. For example, in February 2008 the supervisors were told that the cystic fibrosis program had unexpectedly run out of cash. And, Sherman-Rohl's immediate supervisors approved her claims without examining backup documentation. As a result of the Inspector General's report, DOH is disciplining three supervisors – Elizabeth Berberian, David Hoffman and Thomas Blake – for dereliction of duty.

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