



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Final Report
April 22, 2009

**Nurse's Assistant Steals \$2,000 From Patient at NYS
Veteran's Home, Inspector General Finds**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The New York State Inspector General found that Annette Harris, a nurse's assistant working at the New York State Veterans' Home at St. Albans, misappropriated money from a disabled veteran under her care at the home. Harris withdrew cash at two separate automated teller machines from the bank account of James Jordan without his authorization. The investigation was conducted jointly with the New York City Police Department, and Harris has been arrested and charged in Queens County.

ALLEGATIONS

On October 27, 2008, Neville Goldson, the administrator of the New York State Veterans' Home at St. Albans, informed the Inspector General that James Jordan, a disabled 82-year-old resident at the facility, had reported unauthorized withdrawals from his bank account.

SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATION

The New York State Veterans' Home at St. Albans is operated by the New York State Department of Health for veterans and family members who require skilled nursing care. Annette Harris was hired as a certified nurse's assistant on July 7, 1994. Harris was assigned to care for Jordan, who is physically disabled. The Home's policy on "relationships between residents and staff" states that "The New York State Veteran's Home at St. Albans requires that all staff . . . maintain appropriate professional relationships with residents of the facility." As a "point of emphasis," the policy states that "[r]elationships between a staff person and a resident are not to develop beyond the scope of the staff person's professional responsibilities. This includes, but is not limited to . . . financial transactions (e.g. shopping, banking) . . ." Administrator Goldson further informed the Inspector General that each resident has access to a lock box to store personal items.

Goldson informed the Inspector General that on October 21, 2008, he learned that Jordan had discovered unauthorized withdrawals from his bank account. That day, Goldson interviewed Jordan, who told Goldson that he had showed his nurse's assistant his ATM card and pin number. When Goldson asked Jordan why he would show his card to a nurse's assistant, Jordan responded, "I don't know." Jordan showed Goldson his bank statement reflecting withdrawals from an ATM at the Home for \$201.75 on October 9, 2008, and \$1,001.75 on October 10, 2008. Bank records showed that Jordan's ATM card was also used on October 18, 2008, at a Commerce Bank branch in Valley Stream, New York, to withdraw \$803.00. Bank records also reflected four unsuccessful attempts to access Jordan's account. Jordan confirmed that Goldson's report of events was correct, and stated that he had not authorized Harris to withdraw funds from his account.

The Inspector General obtained security camera footage from the Commerce Bank ATM in Valley Stream from the time when money was withdrawn from Jordan's account on October 18, 2008. A New York City Police Officer showed the security photographs to Goldson, who identified Harris.

On October 22, 2008, the Home placed Harris on administrative leave pending investigation. On November 25, 2008, Harris was suspended from duty at the Home and served with a notice of discipline charging her with using Jordan's ATM card without permission to withdraw money. The notice of discipline reflected a proposed penalty of termination. On December 8, 2008, Harris resigned from her position at the Home.

On December 12, 2008, Harris was arrested. She was arraigned the following day and charged by the Queens County District Attorney with two counts of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree and one count of Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Inspector General found that Harris used the ATM card of a disabled veteran to make unauthorized withdrawals from his account. Harris resigned while disciplinary charges were pending, and is being prosecuted by the Queens County District Attorney's Office.