



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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**DOI ARRESTS TWO INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS FOR ALLEGEDLY DEFRAUDING
CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE'S EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM OF \$11,000**
--Today's arrests follow a DOI investigation that led to a similar arrest in August--

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the Department of Investigation (DOI), announced today the arrests of YUDELKA SOTO and SUZETTE COMPAS for allegedly falsely billing and receiving approximately \$11,000 between 2003 and 2005 for developmental therapy sessions they never provided to six learning disabled infants and toddlers in need of intervention services.

SOTO, 46, of Manhattan, and COMPAS, 51, of Brooklyn, were employed as independent contractors for providers that contracted with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DOHMH) Early Intervention Program (EIP). DOHMH oversees the EIP in New York City. EIP is a comprehensive, interagency program that supports infants and children with developmental delays in their effort to realize their full potential. The program receives funds from the State, City and Federal governments.

SOTO has been charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a class D felony; Forgery in the Second Degree, a class D felony; Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, a class D felony and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, a class E felony. If convicted, she faces up to seven years in prison.

COMPAS has been charged with Grand Larceny in the Third Degree, a class D felony; Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, a class E felony; Forgery in the Second Degree, a class D felony; Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree, a class E felony; and Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E felony. If convicted, she faces up to seven years in prison.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, "These individuals are accused of bilking money from a program that provides services to children with disabilities who need the important assistance that the Early Intervention Program provides. Today's arrests follow a similar one in August that resulted from a DOI investigation, underscoring DOI's continued vigilance on this issue, one that affects some of the most vulnerable individuals in our City."

DOI's investigation into allegations involving SOTO and COMPAS was prompted by complaints that SOTO and COMPAS were allegedly defrauding EIP by submitting documents bearing the forged signatures of parents, submitting false bills, and receiving payments for services they never rendered. According to the criminal complaint against SOTO, on 93 occasions, between 2004 and 2005, she allegedly falsely claimed to have provided therapy services to two children in need of developmental services in Manhattan. During that same timeframe she did provide two sessions for the children, the complaint said. According to the criminal complaint against COMPAS, between 2003 and 2004, she allegedly falsely claimed to have provided therapy services to four children with disabilities in Brooklyn. DOI's investigation determined that SOTO and COMPAS were paid approximately \$7,650 and \$3,350, respectively, for those therapy sessions that did not take place.

SOTO and COMPAS are also employed by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) and each holds a teaching certificate in special education.

Today's arrests come two months after a DOI investigation led to the arrest of DONNA M. TILLMAN, a licensed New York State Speech pathologist, who allegedly falsely billed and received \$62,000 between 2002 and 2004 for remedial therapy sessions that she never provided to approximately 59 developmentally disabled infants and toddlers in need of the therapy. TILLMAN, 58, of New Rochelle, N.Y., was charged in August 2007 with Grand Larceny in the Second Degree, a class C felony. If convicted, she faces up to 15 years in prison. Her next court date is November 19, 2007 in Bronx Supreme Court.

According to TILLMAN's criminal complaint, between 2002 and 2004, she allegedly falsely claimed to have been providing speech therapy to several children at different locations in the Bronx on the same date and at the same time. Approximately 940 therapy sessions overlapped, according to the criminal complaint. The DOI investigation found that TILLMAN was allegedly paid about \$62,000 for sessions she did not hold with children, even though they were in need of them.

The investigation was conducted under the supervision of DOI's Inspector General for DOHMH, Christopher Staackmann, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Stephan Zander, Chief Investigator Byron Biggerstaff, and Confidential Investigator Salvatore Mazzone.

The SOTO case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Savvas S. Diacosavvas from the Special Prosecutions Bureau of the Office of New York County District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau, under the supervision of Bureau Chief Tom Wornom.

The COMPAS case is being prosecuted by the Office of Kings County District Attorney Charles J. Hynes.

The TILLMAN case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Jessica Lupo of the Office of Bronx District Attorney Robert T. Johnson, under the supervision of Thomas Kapp, Chief of the Arson/Auto/Economic Fraud Bureau.

Criminal complaints are merely an accusation. 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.

Get the worms out of the Big Apple. To report someone ripping off the City, call DOI at (212) 825-5959.