



Illinois Ethics Matters

March 29, 2023

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Honesty, Integrity, Service

A newsletter from the Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies
of the Illinois Governor

Office of Executive Inspector General

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Announcements

- The OEIG released its Fourth Quarter & 2022 Annual Report for its Hiring & Employment Monitoring (HEM) Division. Among other compliance activities, HEM issued 52 written Advisories to 24 different agencies. Advisories summarize HEM's review of a hiring process and make recommendations on how to proceed in the future. The HEM report is available [here](#).

Fraud and Lack of Reporting for Jailed Benefit Recipients

An OEIG investigative report uncovered fraud in the use of a Link card by an Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) caseworker. Link cards are issued to benefit recipients in order to purchase food items. IDHS instructs clients that the “benefits are to be used to purchase food for your household only.” Under IDHS policy, people who are incarcerated are generally not eligible for food benefits.

By examination of various records, OEIG discovered a personal relationship between the IDHS caseworker and Individual 1. Individual 1 had been receiving food benefits from 2013 to 2021. The OEIG found that Individual 1 continued to receive benefits despite being incarcerated in a county jail from March 2020 to April 2021.

The OEIG obtained and reviewed photos and videos of the caseworker using the Individual 1's Link card at stores near her home—these purchases totaled at least \$1,061. During her OEIG interview, the caseworker denied knowing that Individual 1 was in the county jail, and stated that she was trying to “assist” him by checking the balance on the Link card and making purchases for him. However, through review of records and telephones recordings from the county jail, the OEIG determined that the caseworker was in regular contact with Individual 1 and had regularly deposited funds into his commissary account.

The OEIG concluded that the caseworker knowingly used the Link card in an unauthorized manner and violated IDHS policy by participating in fraud and that she condoned fraud when she failed to report that Individual 1 was incarcerated and ineligible for benefits. The OEIG also concluded that the caseworker knowingly made false statements to its investigators. The OEIG recommended that the caseworker be terminated, but she resigned shortly after the completion of the OEIG investigation.

In addition to the individual misconduct, the OEIG investigation revealed that data had not been exchanged between the county sheriff and IDHS as required by the Illinois Public Aid Code; as result, Individual 1 continued to receive benefits for more than a year. Despite a prior OEIG recommendation, IDHS had not entered into a data exchange agreement with the county sheriff. In response to this report, the OEIG requested that IDHS provide a list of all counties for which there is a data exchange agreement and all counties that do not presently have an agreement. As of the date of IDHS's response in July 2021, only 27 of 102 Illinois county sheriff offices have an intragovernmental agreement with IDHS in place for reporting of incarcerated individuals.

OEIG Case No. 20-00722 is available on the OEIG's [website](#).