

**New York Post**  
**Welfare cops expose poorly done scams**  
By JOSHUA SAUL

(September 9, 2012) City investigators saved taxpayers nearly a billion dollars last year by busting government-benefits hustlers, according to documents obtained exclusively by The Post.

The Human Resources Administration's almost 1,000 investigators used everything from Facebook photos to car and house bills to catch fraudsters who bilk the city out of cash assistance, Medicaid and food stamps.

"New York is a very entrepreneurial city, so you have to keep refining what you do to keep ahead of the bad boys," said James Sheehan, the HRA's chief integrity officer.

In the first six months of this year, HRA investigators recouped more than \$506 million — an increase of about 8 percent over the same period last year. In 2011, investigators saved taxpayers \$968 million.

The probers use several tactics to root out cheats:

\* **The Facebook Frisk:** Cash-hungry wives claim their husbands have left them and file for "assistance for needy family" benefits. But when investigators spy on the women's Facebook accounts, they often find recent pictures that include the smiling hubbies.

"The investigator shows her the Facebook account and asks if she wants to reconsider her statement," Sheehan said. "You get a lot of confessions that way."

\* **The Waverly Scheme:** When large numbers of New Jersey residents began showing up at the HRA's Waverly Center on West 14th Street — less than a block from a PATH station — claiming to be homeless and demanding benefits and food stamps, the HRA responded by placing two investigators on site to question them.

"There were three reactions," Sheehan said. "First was that people would run away. Second was that you would get a confession. Third was that they wouldn't apply — they would withdraw their application."

\* **Lie Up, Lie Down:** Some dumb crooks lie that they have a high income in order to qualify for a luxury- car loan, even as they also lie that they have a low income in order to qualify for benefits. When investigators find a couple on Medicaid that owns a BMW and a Lexus, they bring them in for questioning.

\* **Where Are They Now?** When Medicaid recruiters who lie and cheat are fired, they are often rehired by disreputable companies. HRA investigators keep a close eye on those firms.

\* **Real Estate:** As with shady car buyers, when HRA investigators identify a person claiming benefits who lives on tony Park Avenue, they start digging.

[http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/welfare\\_cops\\_expose\\_poor\\_ly\\_done\\_NnQdLQG48UdJaDAjgeK0aP?utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_content=Local](http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/welfare_cops_expose_poor_ly_done_NnQdLQG48UdJaDAjgeK0aP?utm_medium=rss&utm_content=Local)

\* The PARIS Match: The federal government runs a computer program called PARIS — the Public Assistance Reporting Information System — that reports people who illegally claim benefits in New York while also receiving them in another state.

\* The Food Stamp Snare: Hustlers will sell the stamps — which are actually an electronic benefits card — to unscrupulous bodegas and grocery stores. So HRA investigators will look for when large amounts are used at stores where big purchases are unlikely, and for cards that have been tested — such as when someone buys a 29-cent item just to confirm how much money is on the card.