



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

ROSE GILL HEARN  
COMMISSIONER

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**DOI ARRESTS CITY HEALTH EMPLOYEE ON CHARGES OF STEALING CHECKS FROM A PUBLIC SCHOOL NURSE**

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced the arrest of MARIA ESPINA, a Public Health Assistant with the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”), on charges that ESPINA stole two blank checks from a City Department of Education (“DOE”) nurse whom she was assigned to review. ESPINA is also charged with depositing the checks, which totaled \$1,675, into her personal bank account. The office of Queens County District Attorney Richard A. Brown is prosecuting the case.

ESPINA, 23, of Queens, was charged with two counts each of Forgery in the Second Degree and Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, class D felonies, and one count of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, a class E felony. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison and a class E felony is punishable by up to four years in prison.

ESPINA had been employed as a Public Health Assistant by DOHMH since May 2007 and visits public schools to supervise the performance of their nurses. In 2008, she received wages of approximately \$20,350 and was suspended today.

DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn said, “City employees who turn their jobs into opportunities to steal money will face arrest and prosecution. There is no tolerance for that kind of illegal conduct.”

DOI’s investigation began after it was notified by DOHMH that personal checks had been stolen from a nurse at a Queens public school in December 2008.

According to the criminal complaint, DOI’s investigation found that on December 15, 2008, ESPINA was at P.S. 118 in Queens to review the school nurse’s performance. The investigation found that the nurse left her office, leaving her handbag inside, for a short period of time; ESPINA remained in the office and the nurse’s personal checkbook was in her handbag. Later, the nurse learned that two of her personal checks were used without her permission. One check was made payable to “Maria Espina” in the amount of \$875, and was noted “for rent,” and a second check was made payable to “cash” in the amount of \$800. Both checks were dated Dec. 15, 2008 and deposited into Espina’s bank account. DOI’s investigation found that the signatures on the checks were fraudulent and the nurse never authorized that \$1,675 be withdrawn from her bank account.

Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked DOHMH Commissioner, Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, and Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown and their staffs for their assistance on this investigation.

DOI’s Office of the Inspector General for DOHMH conducted the investigation, including Deputy Inspector General Stephan Zander and Special Investigator Danielle Caruso, under the supervision of Inspector General Christopher Staackmann.

A criminal complaint is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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