



The City of New York  
Department of Investigation

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Release #13-2020  
nyc.gov/doi

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2020**

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**DOI ARRESTS FORMER DAY CARE DIRECTOR ON CHARGES OF FORGING A TRAINING CERTIFICATE**  
**--DOHMH alerted DOI to discrepancies in documents submitted by the defendant--**

Margaret Garnett, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation (“DOI”), announced the arrest today of a former day care director on charges of providing false statements and forged documents to the City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (“DOHMH”), which misrepresented employment of an educational director at the Brooklyn day care. DOHMH regulates the operation of child care establishments in New York City and is responsible for issuing permits to group child care programs and inspecting those facilities. The defendant submitted the statements and documents during the course of two DOHMH inspections. DOI began this investigation after DOHMH reported to DOI that the defendant’s statements and submitted documents contained discrepancies. The office of Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez is prosecuting this case.

YELENA RABICH, 30, of Staten Island, N.Y., is charged with three counts each of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree, a class D Felony; Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the First Degree, a class E Felony; and Falsifying Business Records in the Second Degree and Misrepresentation by a Child Day Care Provider, both class A misdemeanors. Upon conviction, a class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison, a class E felony is punishable by up to four years in prison, and a class A misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year’s incarceration.

DOI Commissioner Margaret Garnett said, “Parents place their faith in child care operators to employ and retain qualified staff to care for and protect their children. When a day care operator fails to have the appropriate staff, and then forges documents to cover that up, as charged here, they will be held accountable. I thank DOHMH for its partnership on this investigation and the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office for its prosecution of the matter. Together, we worked to hold this alleged fraudster accountable and ensure that there is no tolerance for anyone who puts the health and safety of children at risk.”

Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez said, “Each and every day parents across Brooklyn entrust the care of their children to child care facilities whose workers are held to strict standards. This investigation has revealed that there are some child care operators who allegedly seek to circumvent those standards for their own benefit. I commend the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Department of Investigation for their work on this case and we will now seek to hold this defendant accountable for allegedly trying to take shortcuts that may leave children at risk.”

According to the criminal complaint, in March 2018, DOHMH inspected Royal Star day care on Dooley Street in Brooklyn where the defendant was the director. While a DOHMH inspector was conducting an inspection of the site, the defendant informed the inspector that the program’s educational

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director was not present at the day care because the educational director was attending CPR and first aid training. The defendant provided DOHMH with what appeared to be attendance records as proof of the educational director's employment with the program over the previous two weeks, and a letter, signed by RABICH confirming the educational director's continued employment. Following the inspection, the defendant emailed DOHMH a copy of a Certificate of Completion from CPRCertification.com for Basic First Aid and Adult/Child/Infant CPR that appeared to have been issued to the educational director on the date of DOHMH's inspection. However, the educational director ceased working for the day care in August 2017 and the CPR Certification Institute had no record of the educational director ever taking its training program.

DOHMH ordered Royal Star shut down in February 2019 and the day care is currently operating under different leadership, with proper permits, under the name Aspiring Minds. The defendant currently does not have a permit to operate a day care facility in New York City.

Commissioner Garnett thanked DOHMH Commissioner Dr. Dave Chokshi and his staff for their assistance and partnership in this investigation. Commissioner Garnett also thanked Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez and his staff for their prosecution of this matter.

This investigation was conducted by DOI's Office of the Inspector General for DOHMH, specifically Special Investigator Alexander Lai, under the supervision of Inspectors General Ann Petterson and Clint Daggan, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Investigations Dominick Zarrella, and First Deputy Commissioner Daniel Cort.

The office of Brooklyn District Attorney Eric Gonzalez is prosecuting the case, specifically Assistant District Attorney Sara Walshe, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Laura Neubauer, Chief of the Public Integrity Bureau.

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

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