

September 20, 2006

Hon. Joel I. Klein
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 314
New York, NY 10007

Re: Misconduct at the Scan Center
SCI Case #2005-1059

Dear Chancellor Klein:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated misconduct at the Department of Education (“DOE”) Division of Assessment and Accountability Scan Center (“Scan Center”) in Long Island City.¹ Specifically, we found:

- Rosalyn Sellers, a DOE employee assigned to the Scan Center, facilitated the process through which a number of individuals submitted fraudulent medical forms in an attempt to secure temporary work through a division of Goodwill Industries of Greater New York and Northern New Jersey, Inc. known as GoodTemps.²
- Cassandra Thompson, a former GoodTemps worker, assisted several individuals in obtaining the false medical forms for a fee. She is a former DOE employee who resigned after being convicted of welfare fraud.³

¹ The Scan Center is a unit of the DOE that is responsible for the processing of testing materials for the New York City Public School District.

² Prior to the start of this investigation, Sellers was reassigned to the Pre-Scan Unit within the Scan Center with no change in title or salary but was prohibited from dealing with GoodTemps or with “any issues regarding temporary staff.” GoodTemps is a company that provides temporary workers and consultants to the DOE.

³ Cassandra Thompson was convicted of this welfare fraud on February 25, 1997. In a January 12, 1998 letter to the New York City School System, Cassandra Thompson stated that she “irrevocably” resigned, and added “I understand that I will not be employed by the New York City Board of Education [now DOE] or by any Community School District within the City of New York in any capacity in the future, and that I will not seek employment with the New York City Board of Education or with any Community School District within the City of New York in the future.”

- After Cassandra Thompson left her GoodTemps placed employment at the Scan Center, she continued to provide fraudulent medical forms for money by using her daughter, Chelsea Thompson, who was then assigned by GoodTemps to the DOE's Office of Pupil Transportation, which is housed in the same building as the Scan Center.⁴
- Michelle Skipper, a former GoodTemps employee, claimed that she submitted a valid medical form despite contrary information from the doctor who purportedly signed the document.⁵
- Other individuals submitted fraudulent medical forms to GoodTemps and were placed at DOE facilities.
- Eleanor Garvin, a former DOE employee and current GoodTemps consultant assigned to the DOE, refused to name the individuals at the Scan Center who discussed "seeing Cassandra for medical forms."
- A DOE employee failed to contact the Office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District ("SCI") to report improprieties pertaining to the manner in which these medical forms were completed. In certain instances, this employee did not take appropriate steps to make certain that the contracts for GoodTemps temporary workers and consultants were being utilized properly.
- GoodTemps does not have an adequate system in place to ensure integrity in the collecting and processing of medical forms.⁶

The Investigation

This investigation began in April 2005, when Gerald Prezioso, Director of Contract Compliance for the DOE, forwarded a complaint from GoodTemps which alleged that a number of individuals, seeking work with GoodTemps and placement at DOE facilities, submitted forged medical forms in their efforts to gain employment.⁷ David Schoch, Senior Vice President of GoodTemps, stated that in April 2005, Carrisa Marker, a former GoodTemps Placement Supervisor, advised him that she had a problem verifying the medical forms of several individuals seeking to work at the DOE's Scan Center through GoodTemps.⁸ Schoch explained that under the New York State Industries for the Disabled ("NYSID") contract being used by the

⁴ During the course of this investigation GoodTemps terminated Chelsea Thompson's employment due to her previous submission of a fraudulent medical form.

⁵ Skipper claimed that she "dropped off" her GoodTemps medical form at the medical center and retrieved a completed one a few hours later.

⁶ As a result of this investigation, GoodTemps has undertaken steps to improve this system.

⁷ Claire Gallagher, a DOE procurement analyst, informed Prezioso of the complaint. David Schoch, Senior Vice President of GoodTemps, had notified Gallagher of an apparent problem with submitted medical forms.

⁸ Unrelated to this investigation, Marker left her employment at GoodTemps in January 2006.

DOE for temporary workers, 75 % of the workforce maintained by GoodTemps had to be disabled.⁹ Schoch stated that it was the responsibility of Wilma Calderon, GoodTemps Records Supervisor, to review medical forms to ensure compliance.

Calderon confirmed that it was her job to approve or reject the medical documentation submitted to GoodTemps.¹⁰ According to Calderon, an acceptable medical form needed to generally describe a medical disability as a chronic condition, however, she acknowledged that there were many occasions when she approved forms that failed to satisfy that requirement.¹¹ Moreover, Calderon explained that despite the fact that the direction on the medical form indicated that a medical stamp was required to be placed on the document, she processed forms without that marking. Calderon stated that in April 2005, Calderon's assistant, Joanna Rose, advised Marker about questionable forms for several individuals who were requested for placement by the DOE.¹²

Investigators spoke to Carrisa Marker, who confirmed that either Calderon or Rose came to her with a concern over the medical forms for Hector Bernardez and Orease Defreitas, which had been faxed from the DOE.¹³ According to Marker, while attempting to verify the information that appeared on the submitted medical forms, she received a call from a woman who identified herself as "Cassandra" and claimed to be from the "Queens – Long Island Medical Group" where the questionable documents purportedly emanated.¹⁴ When Marker alerted "Cassandra" to the problems with the medical forms, she informed Marker that another set of medical forms would be sent to GoodTemps. Later that day, Marker received a second set of medical forms for Bernardez and Defreitas, and one for Doris Crossley, an individual previously requested for placement by Sellers.¹⁵ Marker stated that she discovered that none of the forms was authentic.¹⁶ According to Marker, upon learning that the paperwork was fraudulent, she contacted Sellers.¹⁷ The next day Marker informed Eleanor Garvin that

⁹ Schoch stated that when GoodTemps started providing the DOE with temporary workers under the NYSID contract, GoodTemps agreed to accept all DOE referrals for a period of six months. As a result of accepting a large number of non-disabled DOE referrals, GoodTemps was out of compliance with its NYSID mandate.

¹⁰ Calderon explained that medical forms could be faxed, mailed or dropped off at the GoodTemps office.

¹¹ Schoch explained that an individual who had submitted a medical form which indicated a non-chronic condition should not have been approved for placement as a disabled worker.

¹² Sellers submitted Requisition Fax Sheets for these individuals with the questionable medical forms.

¹³ Sellers referred these individuals, requested that they be placed at the Scan Center, and faxed their medical forms to GoodTemps.

¹⁴ In attempting to verify the authenticity of the documents, Marker had contacted the Queens – Long Island Medical Group, P.C., Astoria Center.

¹⁵ Sellers submitted a request for Crossley to be assigned to the Scan Center.

¹⁶ The doctor listed on the first set of forms informed Marker that he did not know Bernardez or Defreitas. The doctor who was alleged to have signed their replacement forms and Doris Crossley's form was on vacation for the date that appeared on the documents. Investigators from this office later confirmed that all these forms were fraudulent.

¹⁷ At that time, Sellers was responsible for handling purchasing for the Scan Center and was that unit's liaison between the DOE and GoodTemps.

GoodTemps would not employ Bernardez, Defreitas, and Crossley because all of their forms were “false.”¹⁸ Marker advised investigators that Bernardez reported that Sellers told him not to worry “about the medical documentation.” In addition, Marker learned from Crossley that “someone” at the DOE told her that “the DOE would take care of the doctor’s [form].”

The Investigation Expands

Investigators from this office requested the medical documentation of other GoodTemps workers assigned to the DOE’s Scan Center. Marker informed investigators that, after our investigation began, she examined other medical forms submitted to GoodTemps, including those relating to Lamont Thompson, Suriyon Kane, Collin Douglas, and Charles Ransom, and she believed that their forms were fraudulent.¹⁹ Investigators later determined that the State Identification numbers listed on all these individuals’ forms as well as on other submitted fraudulent forms were false.²⁰

According to Regina Illery, Senior Executive Assistant for the DOE’s Office of Assessment and Accountability, Sellers was responsible for handling purchasing, which included securing temporary workers for the Scan Center.²¹ Illery stated that Sellers, who had reported to Garvin, was supposed to replace Garvin upon Garvin’s retirement from the DOE.²²

After Garvin retired, Illery hired her as a consultant through GoodTemps. Garvin was supposed to train Sellers to take over the duties Garvin had performed as a DOE employee. However, Garvin has held this training/consultant position for over two years and, as of September 2006, Garvin is still a GoodTemps consultant assigned to the DOE.²³ Despite the fact that Illery believed that Sellers was incapable of handling the position alone, Illery nevertheless continued to retain Garvin in an attempt to train Sellers. Instead of removing Sellers and instructing Garvin to train another person, Illery implemented procedures which required Sellers to report all her actions to either Garvin or Illery.²⁴ According to Illery, Sellers did not adhere to

¹⁸ According to Regina Illery, Senior Executive Assistant for the DOE’s Office of Assessment and Accountability, Garvin was hired as a consultant to train Sellers who was supposed to take over Garvin’s former DOE position.

¹⁹ During the course of this investigation, Charles Ransom died and Collin Douglas left GoodTemps. GoodTemps terminated the employment of Lamont Thompson and Suriyon Kane after it was determined that their submitted medical forms were fraudulent.

²⁰ A State Identification number is unique to each doctor and is obtained from the New York State Education Department Office of the Professions, Division of Professional Licensing. The false State Identification numbers listed on the medical documentation of Collin Douglas, Suriyon Kane and Charles Ransom were similar, if not identical, to the ones listed on the documentation of Chelsea Thompson, Tishawn Thomas and Michelle Skipper. All these forms were dated within a two month period.

²¹ Illery acknowledged that she learned of the fraudulent activity with the medical notes from fellow DOE employee Claire Gallagher.

²² Sellers worked in the budget office under Garvin’s supervision before Garvin’s retirement.

²³ Garvin is currently training another DOE employee to do the work that Garvin performed as a DOE employee.

²⁴ Examples of these procedures included requiring all requests to be in writing, not allowing Sellers to do anything that was not documented in an e-mail, and requiring backup information on anything Sellers requested Illery to sign.

these measures and “she [Sellers] thought she had more authority than she did.” Illery stated that after she became aware of the questionable forms, she removed Sellers from the purchasing position and placed Sheila Moore at the Scan Center to perform Sellers’s duties.²⁵

Illery provided investigators with a copy of a letter that she received from Sellers in which Sellers wrote, “Cassandra [Thompson] recommended two gentlemen to me... [Defreitas and Bernardez]...On Monday evening, after their applications were filled out by the doctor, they gave their papers to Cassandra’s daughter [Chelsea Thompson], to give to me on Tuesday, morning 4/12/05....I immediately faxed them [medical forms] to Good Temps [sic].” In her letter, Sellers indicated that after this initial medical paperwork was not accepted she contacted Cassandra Thompson, who advised Sellers that she knew another doctor who could examine Defreitas and Bernardez for the purpose of completing new medical forms for submission to GoodTemps.²⁶

Bernardez informed investigators that he paid Cassandra Thompson \$25 to get a “job” at the Scan Center.²⁷ According to Bernardez, Cassandra told him, “all you gotta do is come up with the \$25 for the medical form.” Bernardez added that he spoke to Sellers who told him to “make sure you give the money [\$25] to Chelsea [Thompson, Cassandra Thompson’s daughter].” Bernardez explained that Cassandra Thompson called and reminded him “don’t forget to give \$25 to Chelsea [Thompson] to give to Rosalyn [Sellers].” Bernardez maintained that he gave Defreitas, his stepson, \$25 and Defreitas met Chelsea Thompson and gave her \$50 for Bernardez and himself. Bernardez stated that he neither saw nor completed any GoodTemps medical documentation.²⁸ According to Bernardez, Cassandra Thompson instructed him to report for work at the DOE. Under the supervision of investigators, Bernardez placed a telephone call to Sellers from the SCI office. During the call, in reference to the refund of the \$25 Bernardez had paid for the medical form, Sellers expressed relief that “[Cassandra] took care of [him].”²⁹

²⁵ Garvin continued to be retained as a consultant to train Moore.

²⁶ This letter was dated May 2, 2005.

²⁷ Bernardez told investigators that he had been arrested on four occasions and was currently on parole, however, on his GoodTemps application he responded “no” to the question, “Have you been convicted of a criminal offense within the last ten (10) years.” A background check by investigators revealed that, in actuality, Bernardez had been arrested on six occasions, the most recent being January 2001, for which he pled guilty in March 2001 to Burglary in the Third Degree. He is currently on parole for this offense. Bernardez stated that Cassandra Thompson is his wife’s father’s fiancée.

²⁸ Interviews with Dr. Rebecca Trojic and Dr. Joerg Bose at the Queens – Long Island Medical Group, P.C., Astoria Center confirmed that neither Bernardez nor Defreitas was their patient and that the signatures on the medical paperwork were not theirs.

²⁹ Bernardez stated that after this call, Cassandra Thompson contacted him and instructed him to “keep [his] mouth shut” and to not “call Rosalyn Sellers again...Rosalyn got a demotion...that was her penalty.”

Originally, Defreitas told investigators that he had spoken to Sellers who informed him that she would take care of the medical form and that he should pay the fee.³⁰ When questioned under oath, Defreitas changed his story and claimed he had not spoken to Sellers about a medical form and had thought the \$25 was for his application. He denied knowing about fraudulent medical forms or any medical forms required by GoodTemps. Defreitas explained that Cassandra Thompson told his mother to tell him that he and Bernardez each had to give her daughter, Chelsea Thompson, \$25 for their paperwork. Defreitas added that he met with Chelsea and gave her \$50 for their jobs at the DOE. The next day Defreitas and Bernardez went to work at the Scan Center, but at the end of their work day Sellers notified them that something was wrong with their paperwork and they had to leave the DOE facility. Defreitas stated that a short time later his mother received a money order from Cassandra Thompson to pay him and Bernardez for the day they worked at the Scan Center.³¹

Doris Crossley informed investigators that a friend had given her Sellers's telephone number and she then contacted Sellers seeking employment at the DOE. Crossley stated that Sellers sent GoodTemps paperwork to Crossley which Crossley subsequently completed and hand delivered to GoodTemps.³² According to Crossley, thereafter, she contacted Sellers who mentioned a \$25 fee for a medical form. Although Crossley first denied paying money for a medical form, she later acknowledged that she paid \$25 to Sellers for the document.³³ Crossley stated that Sellers returned the \$25 to her after it was discovered that Crossley's form was not authentic and, as a result, she was not permitted to work for GoodTemps.³⁴

Tishawn Thomas, a former temporary worker assigned to the DOE, explained that while she was assigned to the Scan Center through the TempForce agency, she was informed by someone at the DOE that temporary workers wishing to continue at the DOE needed to be employed by GoodTemps. According to Thomas, that person, whose name she could not or would not recall, informed her that she could get the medical note that was required for employment with GoodTemps from Cassandra Thompson. Thomas stated that Cassandra Thompson told her, "you give me a couple of dollars and I'll get the doctor's note for you." Thomas explained that Cassandra Thompson informed her that the form would cost \$20.

³⁰ The two medical forms submitted for Defreitas both reflected the incorrect spelling of his last name.

³¹ GoodTemps did not pay Defreitas or Bernardez for the day. Cassandra Thompson admitted that she sent money to Defreitas's mother, but claimed it was not for Defreitas or Bernardez.

³² Crossley stated that when she dropped off her paperwork she was interviewed by a GoodTemps representative.

³³ Crossley claimed that she could not remember how she paid the \$25, but acknowledged that there was an occasion when she met with Sellers at Sellers's DOE office. The medical form submitted for Crossley had the incorrect spelling of her first and last names.

³⁴ Sellers admitted that she refunded \$25 to Crossley, but claimed she received the money from Chelsea Thompson.

Thomas described how she gave \$20 to Cassandra Thompson.³⁵ Thomas stated that although she submitted some paperwork to GoodTemps, she obtained other employment and did not work for the company.³⁶

According to Sheila Moore, Illery assigned her to the Scan Center to replace Sellers. Moore explained that Sellers told her that Cassandra Thompson introduced Sellers to two individuals, seeking to be temporary workers, who each gave Cassandra Thompson \$25 for medical forms. Moore informed investigators that Sellers stated that she gave money orders to Lamont Thompson for his mother, Cassandra Thompson, in order to get these individuals the relevant documents. Moore stated that DOE Scan Center employee Vessie Middleton told her that Cassandra Thompson had been “doing this [false medical forms] for years,” in more places than just the Scan Center, and that Cassandra Thompson knew a girl who worked in the doctor’s office who filled the forms out for her.³⁷ Moore added that Suriyon Kane admitted to her that he had paid \$25 to Cassandra Thompson for a doctor’s certification.³⁸

Suriyon Kane, assigned to the DOE as a GoodTemps temporary worker and then as a consultant, contacted investigators and admitted that he paid Cassandra Thompson \$20 for his medical form.³⁹ In a subsequent interview at SCI and under oath, Kane again admitted that he paid Cassandra Thompson \$25 in cash for a medical form and submitted the fraudulently completed form to GoodTemps. He explained that Cassandra had repeatedly approached him and offered to get him a signed medical form for \$25. Kane added that after he gave Cassandra \$25, she returned the fraudulently completed form to him. According to Kane, Illery changed him from a GoodTemps temporary worker to a GoodTemps consultant. He added that his duties have changed slightly since his classification changed from temporary worker to consultant.⁴⁰

³⁵ Garvin provided investigators with a folder that she claimed Sellers had maintained which contained documentation for GoodTemps workers. Garvin claimed she had no knowledge of the precise contents of the folder. The folder contained an envelope with a blue note affixed which read “Doctor’s application from Cassandra [Thompson].” The envelope contained a form for “Tishawn Thomas” and was dated 8/26/04. Garvin stated that if she had known the fraudulent medical form was in the folder she would not have provided the folder to investigators because “it seemed like there was a mess.” Dr. Trojic, who purportedly signed the form, confirmed it to be fraudulent. Sellers confirmed that she wrote the information that appeared on the affixed blue note and that she received the completed medical form from Cassandra Thompson.

³⁶ Thomas never received the completed medical form, nor was it submitted to GoodTemps.

³⁷ In an interview with investigators, Middleton did not recall this conversation with Moore, but acknowledged that she heard individuals discussing contacting Cassandra Thompson for a completed medical form. Middleton did not identify these individuals.

³⁸ Suriyon Kane admitted to investigators that he paid Cassandra Thompson \$25 in cash for his medical form, which he submitted to GoodTemps.

³⁹ Dr. Trojic confirmed Suriyon Kane was not her patient and the signature on Kane’s medical form was not hers.

⁴⁰ When Kane was assigned as a temporary worker, he was paid \$18 per hour for which GoodTemps charged the DOE \$26.69 per hour. When Kane became a consultant, he was paid \$39.28 per hour for which GoodTemps charged the DOE \$47.14 per hour.

Garvin informed investigators that, while at the Scan Center, she heard people talking about seeing Cassandra for medical forms and that Cassandra could “hook up” temporary workers with medical forms. Garvin refused to tell investigators the names of the people who made these statements.

Chelsea Thompson, a GoodTemps worker assigned to the DOE, stated that when she needed her own GoodTemps medical form completed, she signed the document and gave it to her mother. According to Chelsea, her mother, Cassandra Thompson, then took Chelsea’s form to Michelle Skipper, a GoodTemps worker assigned to the DOE, for completion of the doctor’s section.⁴¹ Chelsea Thompson admitted that she submitted a fraudulent medical form to GoodTemps in an effort to secure employment and an assignment at the DOE.

According to Chelsea Thompson, thereafter, sometime in 2005, her mother contacted her regarding the medical forms of some other individuals. At that time, her mother instructed her to meet with Rosalyn Sellers to retrieve two partially completed medical forms and then to meet Defreitas at the train station to pick up \$50. Chelsea reported that when she received the documents from Sellers, she recalled Sellers asking, “Michelle’s gonna fill them [the medical forms] out, right?”⁴² Chelsea explained that after she gained possession of the forms and the \$50, she met Michelle Skipper in the park and gave Skipper the items.⁴³ Chelsea stated that a few hours later Skipper returned the completed forms to her. Chelsea added that Sellers also gave her \$25 and a third form, relating to Doris Crossley.⁴⁴ Chelsea stated that she returned the completed forms for Defreitas and Bernardez to Sellers. Chelsea did not return Crossley’s form to Sellers.⁴⁵

Lamont Thompson, a worker assigned to the DOE through GoodTemps and the son of Cassandra Thompson and sibling of Chelsea Thompson, admitted that he never went to the doctor listed on his form.⁴⁶ Lamont Thompson claimed that his wife, Lakeysha Thompson, knew a woman named Michelle Jones who could get the medical form filled out for him.⁴⁷ Lamont Thompson admitted that he submitted a fraudulent medical form to GoodTemps in an effort to secure employment and an assignment at the DOE.

⁴¹ Chelsea stated that she received the form back four hours later with the physician’s section filled out. Skipper denied completing a medical form for Chelsea Thompson or anyone else.

⁴² Chelsea stated that Sellers asked this question, but added that Sellers did not know Michelle Skipper. To investigators, Sellers stated that she did not know Skipper and Skipper stated that she did not know Sellers.

⁴³ Skipper denied this meeting and further denied assisting in the completion of any medical forms.

⁴⁴ Chelsea stated that she did not meet with Doris Crossley.

⁴⁵ Crossley’s form was sent via a facsimile machine, along with a second set of forms for Bernardez and Defreitas, to GoodTemps.

⁴⁶ Dr. Bose, whose signature appears on the form, stated he did not sign the document. Dr. Bose confirmed that Lamont Thompson was not his patient.

⁴⁷ He acknowledged that Michelle Jones and Michelle Skipper may be the same person.

When she was first interviewed by investigators, Michelle Skipper admitted that Chelsea Thompson brought her partially completed GoodTemps medical forms, but claimed that she, in turn, gave the forms to Cassandra Thompson. During her second interview, under oath, Skipper denied helping anyone obtain medical documentation and denied knowing Sellers.⁴⁸ Skipper asserted that she had “never taken money from anyone, anywhere.” Skipper stated that her physician was Dr. Trojic at the “Astoria Medical Center” and when she went to get her medical form completed she left the document with a clerk and was told to pick it up later.⁴⁹

According to Rosalyn Sellers, Cassandra Thompson referred Bernardez and Defreitas to her for employment with GoodTemps. Sellers admitted that she sent their first set of medical forms to GoodTemps through a DOE facsimile machine.⁵⁰ Sellers stated that when the documents were not approved, she contacted Cassandra Thompson who, for the first time, mentioned that she knew a doctor who could fill out new medical forms quickly.⁵¹ Although Sellers repeatedly asserted that this occasion was the first time she learned of this “quick” process from Cassandra Thompson, Sellers had already instructed Crossley to report to the Scan Center on that same day so she could introduce Crossley to Chelsea Thompson for the purpose of obtaining a “quick” medical form. Sellers stated that after she introduced Crossley to Chelsea Thompson, she observed Crossley give Chelsea \$25.⁵² Sellers claimed that after Crossley did not obtain employment with GoodTemps, Chelsea returned Crossley’s \$25 to Sellers and Sellers mailed the money back to Crossley.

In an interview with investigators, Cassandra Thompson stated she was a DOE employee from 1981 to 1998, when she voluntarily resigned. However, she failed to disclose that her resignation and agreement to be barred from working for the DOE occurred after she was convicted of welfare fraud.⁵³ Cassandra Thompson explained that in March 1998, she went to work for TempForce, a company that supplied temporary workers to the DOE, and thereafter she worked for GoodTemps, between August 2004 and February 2005.⁵⁴ Cassandra admitted to

⁴⁸ Sellers denied knowing Skipper.

⁴⁹ The form contains the stamp of the Queens – Long Island Medical Group. P.C., Astoria Center, not a doctor’s stamp, and the alleged name and signature of Dr. Trojic. Dr. Trojic reviewed the document and verified that Skipper was one of her patients. However, Dr. Trojic had never seen the GoodTemps medical form before and she did not sign it. Dr. Trojic added that she had not given anyone permission to sign her name to a document and the State Identification number listed on the document was incorrect.

⁵⁰ Sellers claimed she received the medical forms for Bernardez and Defreitas from Chelsea Thompson.

⁵¹ Sellers stated that she did not send GoodTemps the second set of forms for Bernardez and Defreitas or Doris Crossley’s form.

⁵² Sellers claimed this meeting took place at the beginning of the work day.

⁵³ Cassandra Thompson’s DOE personnel file indicated that she worked for the DOE from February 4, 1981 to January 16, 1998, when she resigned. There was a memorandum in that file that stated “the Office of Legal Services will initiate a Civil Service Law Section 75 proceeding for the welfare fraud arrest.” In her resignation letter, Cassandra Thompson stated that she “irrevocably” resigned and will not work for the DOE again.

⁵⁴ Cassandra Thompson admitted that she was assigned to DOE facilities by both companies.

falsely completing the criminal record section of her GoodTemps application.⁵⁵ She also untruthfully completed the past employment section of her application, in which she failed to disclose her employment with the DOE and instead stated she had worked for Long Island Lighting Company (“LILCO”) for the period of 1981 to 1998.⁵⁶ Although Cassandra Thompson initially denied any involvement in the forging of the forms, she later admitted that she had helped her daughter, Chelsea Thompson, gain employment at GoodTemps by arranging to have her daughter’s medical form completed by Michelle Skipper.⁵⁷ Moreover, Cassandra Thompson claimed that Skipper had called her and requested that Chelsea retrieve two forms from Sellers, pick up an envelope containing money from an unknown man at a local train station, and bring all the items to Skipper in a local park.⁵⁸ Cassandra Thompson alleged that, at the direction of her fiancé, Bernardez’s father-in-law, she sent a money order to Defreitas’s mother. Cassandra professed that the money was a present and not payment for Defreitas’s and Bernardez’s attempted employment with GoodTemps. In addition, Cassandra acknowledged that it was her handwriting that appeared on the envelope with the name Tishawn Thomas on it.⁵⁹ Cassandra denied knowledge of how her son Lamont Thompson received his completed medical form, and maintained that she never advised anyone that she could provide a fraudulent medical form.⁶⁰ Cassandra stated she had a business relationship with Sellers but insisted that she neither telephoned Sellers nor had been telephoned by Sellers.⁶¹

GoodTemps Awareness of Problem with Medical Forms

Investigators reviewed paperwork maintained by GoodTemps for temporary workers and determined that GoodTemps did not use a consistent method to evaluate the medical forms.⁶² In addition, the documentation revealed that GoodTemps was aware of potential problems with its employees’ medical forms at least several weeks before notifying the DOE about the actual

⁵⁵ When Cassandra Thompson filled out her GoodTemps application on August 5, 2004, she failed to note that she had been convicted of a “crime.” Thompson pled guilty to Welfare Fraud on February 25, 1997, paid \$12,000 in restitution, and was sentenced to 3 years probation and 500 hours community service.

⁵⁶ She was employed by the DOE during this time period. LILCO is no longer in operation. KeySpan Energy, which maintains LILCO personnel records, was unable to verify Cassandra Thompson’s LILCO employment.

⁵⁷ Skipper denied completing a medical form for Chelsea Thompson or anyone else.

⁵⁸ Despite Cassandra Thompson’s assertion to the contrary, Chelsea Thompson stated that her mother directed her to meet Defreitas at the train station. In addition, Cassandra Thompson had previously asked Sellers to refer Bernardez and Defreitas to GoodTemps.

⁵⁹ This envelope contained a forged medical form for Tishawn Thomas who advised investigators that in 2004 she paid Cassandra Thompson \$20 to have a fraudulent medical form completed. Cassandra Thompson denied providing anyone with a forged medical document.

⁶⁰ According to Sellers, Cassandra Thompson asked Garvin to refer Lamont Thompson to GoodTemps.

⁶¹ Sellers stated that she spoke to Cassandra Thompson on the telephone several times regarding Defreitas and Bernardez.

⁶² This review focused on the GoodTemps temporary workers who directly or indirectly submitted medical forms bearing the name Queens – Long Island Medical Group, P.C.

fraudulent medical forms.⁶³ Moreover, a number of workers were assigned to the DOE despite the fact that their medical forms were “not good.”⁶⁴ For example, before this investigation began, GoodTemps had labeled the medical forms of a number of individuals, who had been working within the DOE, as “unsatisfactory.”⁶⁵ Nevertheless, these individuals were permitted to continue as GoodTemps employees assigned to the DOE and, for a period of time, were listed by the company as “disabled workers.”⁶⁶ For one “worker,” Suriyon Kane, GoodTemps made only two requests for proper medical documents in a seven month period and when proper medical documentation was not forthcoming, the company reclassified his status as “non-disabled.”⁶⁷ Four months later Kane became a consultant for the DOE, which resulted in a significant raise in pay without a substantial change in duties.⁶⁸

Findings – Temporary Workers

Between January 1, 2004 and June 30, 2006 the DOE hired 916 temporary employees from GoodTemps, with 214 of these being DOE referrals. GoodTemps did not conduct reference checks on any temporary employees supplied to the DOE. In addition, referrals are not tested for skills and have, at times, not even completed a formal interview. Moreover, these referrals, as well as other temporary workers GoodTemps provided to the DOE, were not subjected to background and fingerprint checks.⁶⁹

Specifically, our investigation discovered that temporary worker Cassandra Thompson, a former DOE employee who had resigned from the DOE after she had been convicted of welfare fraud, agreed in her resignation letter not to seek future employment with the BOE [now DOE]. However, she was ultimately hired by GoodTemps and assigned to the DOE on multiple occasions. A reference and background check could have revealed that Cassandra Thompson had fabricated her employment history and had pled guilty to multiple crimes.

In another instance, it is uncertain if the individual who worked under the name “Collin Douglas” assigned by GoodTemps to the DOE was actually the person at the placement. Claiming he was going on vacation, “Douglas” left his assignment at the DOE, and never returned.⁷⁰

⁶³ During the process of improving the quality of medical forms, GoodTemps reviewed the forms of their then current placements and discovered that some of the workers were improperly approved as disabled workers.

⁶⁴ This characterization was displayed in GoodTemps database program.

⁶⁵ This characterization was displayed in GoodTemps database program.

⁶⁶ The forms for both Charles Ransom and Karen Pointer were determined by GoodTemps to be unsatisfactory in March, 2005. GoodTemps deemed Michelle Skipper’s form unsatisfactory in April, 2005, but she was again placed within the DOE in September, 2005. GoodTemps deemed Suriyon Kane’s form unsatisfactory in August 2004; however he was placed within the DOE, as a disabled worker, in September 2004.

⁶⁷ In March 2005, Suriyon Kane’s status was changed to non-disabled worker.

⁶⁸ Under the consultant contract, no medical form was required. Kane became a consultant effective July 1, 2005.

⁶⁹ The current contract does not require these checks.

⁷⁰ Unrelated to this investigation, this individual is being sought by the New York City Police Department.

Findings – Consultants

Under the consultant contract, GoodTemps is required to conduct background and fingerprint checks if the individual to be hired and assigned to the DOE is not referred by the DOE. For the period of July 1, 2005 to June 30, 2006, 623 consultants were assigned to the DOE and in all but two instances the individuals were referred to GoodTemps by the DOE.⁷¹ Accordingly, only two background and fingerprint checks were conducted by GoodTemps.

Recommendations – DOE

The evidence shows that Regina Illery had knowledge of misconduct that related to the obtaining of medical forms. It is the recommendation of this office that Illery be reminded of the requirement to report wrongdoing. Illery failed to contact SCI after she learned that Sellers had submitted fraudulent medical forms on behalf of two individuals seeking employment with GoodTemps and assignment at the DOE. Illery claimed that Claire Gallagher had given her the impression that GoodTemps was looking into the falsified medical notes, however, Illery admitted that Gallagher made no mention of a notification to SCI. Illery acknowledged that she failed to notify SCI herself.⁷²

Moreover, Illery permitted Eleanor Garvin to work as a consultant for several years for the purpose of training Garvin's replacement. Illery also changed Kane from the classification of temporary worker to that of consultant at a substantial cost to the DOE with only a minimal increase in his duties. The propriety of the use of consultants under these circumstances should be re-evaluated.

In addition, Garvin failed to be forthcoming with relevant information requested during this investigation. It is the recommendation of this office that Garvin's services with the DOE be terminated.

Rosalyn Sellers's continual inappropriate conduct makes it clear that she has no place in the New York City school system. It is the recommendation of this office that her employment be terminated, that she be placed on the ineligible list, and that this matter be considered should she apply for any type of employment with the New York City school system in the future.

⁷¹ GoodTemps does not maintain statistical information relating to an applicant's former employer. Accordingly, the number of consultants who were former DOE employees was not determined.

⁷² When asked why she did not contact SCI, Illery responded that she "did not have all the facts yet." However, Illery had spoken with Sellers two days after Defreitas and Bernardez worked at the Scan Center and then allowed Sellers over two weeks to submit a formal recounting of the events.

Recommendations – GoodTemps

As a result of this investigation, GoodTemps has taken action. GoodTemps has indicated that the company has adopted a new medical form. This form attempts to make clear that a qualifying medical condition must be listed for a person to be classified as a disabled worker. In addition, GoodTemps has also hired “experienced rehabilitation specialists” to review, approve, and if necessary, investigate all medical documentation submitted in support of a claimed disability.

We recommend that the following also be implemented:

- A physician’s stamp must be affixed to all medical forms prior to the documents being processed and then verified for authenticity by GoodTemps.⁷³ Anyone determined to have submitted false medical documentation should immediately be terminated from employment and barred from all DOE facilities.
- All individuals named in this report as submitting false medical forms or assisting in the scheme to do so should be barred from any future placement in any DOE facility.
- Upon the discovery of any future fraud or suspected fraud, GoodTemps must immediately notify the DOE and any other appropriate authorities.⁷⁴
- Individuals referred to GoodTemps by the DOE should be treated exactly as any other candidates. Steps must be taken to ensure that the individual is qualified and properly cleared. These steps should include, but not be limited to: qualifying tests, background and reference checks, fingerprinting, and criminal history checks.

Additional Recommendations

It is the recommendation of this office that the DOE fully examine its use of consultants and temporary workers to ensure that individuals hired under those categories provide necessary assistance to the DOE. The DOE should refuse to accept assignment of any individual who submitted a fraudulent medical form as well as those who were aware of the misconduct and neglected and/or refused to report the improper behavior.

⁷³ GoodTemps medical forms have, in the past, cited this requirement, but it was sometimes ignored.

⁷⁴ GoodTemps contacted DOE representatives in this case only after the suspected fraud was confirmed.

Additionally, it is the recommendation of this office that DOE contracts require all temporary workers and consultants to undergo background and fingerprint checks prior to being placed at a DOE facility. Moreover, continued placement of long term consultants should be approved by a high ranking DOE official.⁷⁵

It is also recommended that all DOE contracts contain a clause that requires vendors to immediately report wrongdoing, by DOE employees or persons/companies associated with the DOE, to this office.

It is the further recommendation of this office that a photo ID card system be implemented which requires all persons entering DOE facilities to prominently display the identification provided by their employer.⁷⁶ These ID cards should not appear similar to a DOE ID card.

Finally, all employees should be reminded of their obligation to immediately report alleged misconduct to this office.

We are forwarding a copy of this letter and of our report concerning this investigation to the Office of Legal Services. We are also sending our findings to the State Education Department and the Queens District Attorney's Office, for whatever action they deem appropriate. Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please contact Eileen Daly, the attorney assigned to this case. She may be reached at (212) 510-1407. Please notify Ms. Daly within thirty days of the receipt of this letter of what, if any, action has been taken or is contemplated as a result of our findings. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

RICHARD J. CONDON
Special Commissioner
of Investigation for the
New York City School District

By:

Regina A. Loughran
First Deputy Commissioner

RJC:RAL:ECD:gm

c: Michael Best, Esq.
Theresa Europe, Esq.

⁷⁵ Although there are safeguards in place for salary constraints, there needs to be checks in place for length of assignment.

⁷⁶ All temporary workers and consultants should adhere to this requirement. This requirement is in addition to DOE sign-in procedures as well as other safety measures currently in place.