

CITY OF NEW YORK
THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

May 17, 2024

Hon. David C. Banks
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 314
New York, NY 10007

Re: Jeffrey Vega Atencio
SCI Case #: 2023-2691

Dear Chancellor Banks:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that former Counselor Jeffrey Vega Atencio (“Atencio”), previously employed by community-based organization (“CBO”) Maspeth Town Hall (“MTH”), inappropriately touched a then nine-year-old female student (“Student A”).^{1,2}

I. Investigation & Findings:

The investigation began in March 2023, when the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District (“SCI”) received a complaint from [REDACTED], who reported that [REDACTED] informed [REDACTED] that the sister of Student A (“Sister A”) told [REDACTED] that Atencio put “his hands on [Student A’s] buttocks almost every day” during the previous school year.³

¹ Atencio was suspended from his position at MTH, and he is ineligible in the New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) Personnel Eligibility Tracking System (“PETS”).

² According to MTH’s website: “Maspeth Town Hall is now a thriving community center providing a variety of services including After School Programs, Summer Camp, Mommy & Me Toddler groups, Senior classes in Art, Chair Yoga and Tai Chi and more cultural and recreational activities.” Accessed from <https://www.maspethtownhall.org/about> on May 16, 2024.

³ The allegations were referred to the Queens Child Abuse Squad (“QCAS”) of the New York City Police Department (“NYPD”), who determined that criminal charges could not be filed because Student A was unable to provide specific dates on which the incidents occurred.

SCI investigators spoke with [REDACTED], who confirmed the details of his complaint to SCI.

[REDACTED] told investigators that Sister A informed [REDACTED] that Student A was having nightmares because Atencio “put his hands down [Student A’s] pants and touched her buttocks everyday” while attending an after-school program run by MTH. Officers of the NYPD were called, and [REDACTED] overheard Student A tell them that during an after-school program when Student A was in third grade, Atencio stood behind her and put his hands down her pants inside her underwear. Student A said that other students were present but did not notice what happened. [REDACTED] told investigators that she spoke with Student A several times about Atencio and said that Student A was always consistent in the details of her account.

NYPD QCAS Officer Maria Lewis told investigators that, except for being unable to recall the exact dates of the incidents, Student A was “very descriptive” in her recollection of what Atencio did to her.

Investigators spoke with Student A in the presence of [REDACTED]. Student A said that Atencio would touch her “buttocks” every day for several weeks during an after-school program when she was in third grade. Student A sat in a chair that had an opening in the back. Atencio would stand behind her, put his hand through the opening in the chair, then put his hand under her clothes and inside her underwear. Student A said that Atencio stopped touching her when she told him that she was going to tell someone what he was doing. Student A said that she did not tell anyone until she told her mother the next school year.⁴

SCI investigators spoke with former MTH Counselor Atencio, who said that he was a counselor for the MTH after school program from 2021 to 2023. P.S. 12 was one of two schools at which he worked. Atencio helped students with homework and played math- and phonics-related board games with them. Atencio denied all of Student A’s allegations and said that he had no idea why anyone would make such allegations against him because he got along well with students and staff.

II. Conclusion and Recommendation:

Upon review of the above facts, SCI substantiated that former CBO Maspeth Town Hall Counselor Jeffrey Vega Atencio repeatedly inappropriately touched a then nine-year-old female student. Although Atencio was never a DOE employee, it is the recommendation of this office that Atencio remain ineligible in PETS, and that this matter be revisited should Atencio seek future employment with the DOE or with any of its vendors.

⁴ Despite telling [REDACTED] that no other students noticed what happened, Student A claimed to SCI investigators that two other students in the after-school program were aware of the incidents with Atencio. However, when SCI investigators spoke with those two students, both denied any knowledge of the incidents.

Please respond in writing within 30 days of receipt of this letter as to any action taken regarding Jeffrey Vega Atencio or the recommendations made herein. We are sending a copy of this letter to the DOE Office of Legal Services.

Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please contact David Casanova, the assigned attorney for this matter, at (212) 510-1419 or dcasanova@nycsci.org.

Sincerely,

ANASTASIA COLEMAN
Special Commissioner of Investigation
for the New York City School District

By: /s/ Daniel I. Schlachet
Daniel I. Schlachet
First Deputy Commissioner

AC:DS:DC:lr

cc: Elizabeth Vladeck, Esq.
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