

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

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**VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL**

October 31, 2025

Hon. Melissa Aviles-Ramos  
Chancellor  
New York City Public Schools  
Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street, Room 314  
New York, NY 10007

Re: Philomena Aguaze  
SCI Case #: 2024-03889

Dear Chancellor Aviles-Ramos:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that former New York Therapy Placement Services (“NYTPS”) Occupational Therapist (“OT”) Philomena Aguaze (“Aguaze”), assigned to service students at New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) Public School 69 (“P.S. 69”) on Staten Island, falsified information on session notes for therapy sessions with students that did not take place, and included activities in other session notes that were not performed during therapy sessions.<sup>1,2</sup>

**I. Investigation & Findings:**

The investigation began in April 2024, when the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District (“SCI”) received an anonymous complaint reporting that Aguaze entered session notes for mandated Individualized Educational Program (“IEP”) sessions without actually servicing students for the full mandated time, including entering session notes for days that Aguaze did not see any students.

NYTPS assigned Aguaze to P.S. 69 for the period from February 2, 2024, to April 17, 2024 (the “relevant period”) to cover the caseload of another OT who was out on maternity leave. SCI investigators

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<sup>1</sup> Aguaze was never a DOE employee, and there is no problem code attached to her name. Aguaze is no longer employed by NYTPS. Following her employment with NYTPS, Aguaze was employed by Apex Therapeutic Services, another vendor that provides services to DOE, from approximately July 22, 2025, to March 5, 2025. During that time, Aguaze was assigned to New World Preparatory Charter School and Richmond Preparatory Charter School – both on Staten Island. Since then, Aguaze has applied with another DOE vendor, but is not currently employed with an entity providing services to the DOE.

<sup>2</sup> NYTPS is a third-party vendor that provides occupational therapy services to the New York City Department of Education.

received Aguaze's caseload and session notes from [REDACTED]. During the relevant period, Aguaze was assigned 29 students from P.S. 69.

Investigators reviewed session notes that Aguaze entered for services allegedly provided at P.S. 69. The investigators noted that Aguaze entered approximately 11 session notes for February 19, 2024, and February 23, 2024, but DOE schools were not in session on either of those dates, which fell during the Midwinter Recess. In addition, on one of those alleged sessions on February 19, 2024, Aguaze falsely claimed that the student worked with the special education teacher and her at the school. On other session notes for dates school was in session, investigators noted that Aguaze documented some sessions as group sessions, but recorded different times for each student, which would suggest individual sessions instead. Conversely, Aguaze indicated she had individual sessions with one student, but the session notes indicated that multiple students were present. Aguaze also entered at least five notes indicating that sessions took place in a restroom but did not note any restroom training during those sessions.

[REDACTED] told SCI investigators that Aguaze did not submit any timesheets for the relevant period, and thus, was not paid for any services provided during this period.

SCI investigators spoke with [REDACTED] who said that all providers were required to sign in upon arrival at the school. A review of the P.S. 69 sign-in sheets revealed that during the relevant period, Aguaze's signature only appeared on the sign-in sheet on one date – February 2, 2024. [REDACTED] said that Aguaze was assigned to cover the caseload of another OT who was out on maternity leave. [REDACTED] stated that [REDACTED] told him that some teachers complained to [REDACTED] that Aguaze failed to service her students for the full mandated time and returned the students to their classes earlier than expected. [REDACTED] also told [REDACTED] that teachers complained that Aguaze was often on her cell phone during sessions. As a result, [REDACTED] scheduled a meeting with Aguaze for March 11, 2024. Aguaze failed to appear at the meeting. That day, [REDACTED] emailed Aguaze informing her that she was expected to meet with students for the mandated time as indicated on the students' IEPs, that she was expected to review her students' IEPs to familiarize herself with their needs, and that she needed to arrange coverage with the main office if she had to take a phone call. Aguaze responded two days later with a terse, "Thanks." [REDACTED] notified [REDACTED] of the situation, and a meeting was scheduled with [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and Aguaze. At the meeting, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] asked Aguaze to provide her session notes, but Aguaze could not do so, and explained that she was "behind" on her notes.

SCI investigators spoke with [REDACTED] who confirmed her discussions with [REDACTED] and the meeting with Aguaze and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] told investigators that she did not directly supervise Aguaze because Aguaze was an independent contractor working for NYTPS. Therefore, [REDACTED] contacted [REDACTED] scheduled a meeting with Aguaze. During that meeting, Aguaze denied ending sessions early and claimed that she only used her cell phone to access internet content pertinent to the sessions. [REDACTED] asked Aguaze for her session notes, but she stated they were not completed. Aguaze was given a week to complete and submit the session notes. [REDACTED] told SCI investigators that upon

receiving and reviewing the session notes from Aguaze, she found many errors and false entries in the notes, consistent with the SCI investigators' above-referenced findings.

SCI investigators spoke with former NYTPS OT Aguaze, who said that she was assigned to P.S. 69 from January 2024 through April 2024 through NYTPS to cover for another OT who was on maternity leave. Aguaze stated that [REDACTED] asked for Aguaze's session notes during a meeting, but Aguaze had not completed her notes. Aguaze claimed she typically completed her session notes on weekends due to a "lack of time during the workday." Aguaze said that she kept a record of all of her sessions in a notebook, and that any errors in her session notes were "unintentional" or "typographical errors." Aguaze insisted that she serviced students for the entire duration of their sessions and did not bring students back to class early. Aguaze said that she was never paid for her services at P.S. 69 because she submitted her timesheets late.

## **II. Conclusion and Recommendation:**

Upon review of the above facts, SCI substantiated that former New York Therapy Placement Services Occupational Therapist Philomena Aguaze falsified information on session notes for therapy sessions with students that did not take place and included activities in other session notes that were not performed during therapy sessions. Although Aguaze was never a DOE employee, and is no longer employed by NYTPS, it is the recommendation of this office that a problem code be attached to her name to serve as a reminder should Aguaze seek future employment with the DOE or any of its vendors.

It should be noted that NYTPS never billed the DOE for any of Aguaze's sessions because Aguaze failed to submit her timesheets to NYTPS in a timely manner. Consequently, there is no need for restitution to the DOE.

Please respond in writing within 30 days of receipt of this letter as to any action taken regarding Aguaze, 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](mailto: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.  
Karen Antoine, Esq.  
Katherine Rodi, Esq.  
Monica Davis-Thorne, Director