

Date: April 21, 2014

Customer Service Award Nominee:

Vicki Ruhmann – Compliance Representative

Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Payment Office

Vicki Ruhmann started as a Compliance Representative with Workforce Solutions Financial Aid Office a couple of years ago. Vicki’s position is unique in that her job is to identify situations where a recipient of our services abuses the dollars meant for bon-a-fide eligible customers, and take necessary actions so that those suspects would repay funds obtained fraudulently. While most of the functions performed by Compliance Representatives are covert and almost always invisible to the general public, their work is critical in safeguarding and being accountable for the taxpayers’ dollars. Vicki understands that every dollars spent should be for the worthy cause for eligible customers, and is proud to be a part of the process in collecting overpayments that Harris County District Attorney ultimately demands from the suspect and returns to Texas Workforce Commission. She uses her customer’s perspective to guide her work – and in this case her customers are both individuals who are eligible for and deserve the Workforce Solutions’ services, and the taxpayers.

As a Compliance Representative, Vicki conducts fact finding on cases associated with possible waste and abuse of the Workforce Solutions funds which is taxpayer’s money. Her work involves countless hours of gathering documents, tracking down and interviewing witnesses and suspect(s), coordinating with law enforcement entities in issuing subpoena, and assembling the case files together for referrals to the local law enforcement or for recoupment. While it takes an average of a few months to complete fact findings, in some cases it takes more than six months.

Vicki’s leadership and tactful communication skills in working with organizations like H-GAC, Texas Workforce Commission’s Office of Investigations, Houston Police Department, Harris County District Attorney’s Office, and Galveston County District Attorney’s Office have successfully led to Grand Jury indictment of cases where suspects lied about their employment and/or family status to gain benefits through Workforce Solutions in the Gulf Coast area. It is impossible to solicit assistance in issuing records subpoena, for example, from these entities if there is no mutual respect and understanding about what each other does in the process of prosecution. Vicki has visited these key players face-to-face in numerous occasions to persuade them and gain their understanding of our processes, and built trust and credibility along the way.

Thanks to her team’s diligent and persistent work, Harris County District Attorney’s Office has collected and returned restitutions from felony cases to Texas Workforce Commission for $3,400 in FY2012, $19,000 in FY2013, and a little over $26,000 in FY2014 to date.

On next few pages you will find a copy of email messages from Harris County District Attorney’s Office regarding Vicki’s work. To protect confidentiality of the cases, names of suspects are hidden.

**Email from HCDA #1**

From: Hawkins, Donna [<mailto:HAWKINS_DONNA@dao.hctx.net>]

Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2014 3:36 PM

Subject: Workforce Solutions/TWC case

Today, XXX pleaded guilty to attempted theft.  She had prepaid the restitution of $6930.46 in total.  She was requesting a pretrial diversion, as she feared that her teaching license would be in danger; however, instead we reduced the case to a class A misdemeanor and placed her on 6 months deferred adjudication.  She will pay a $750 fine, do 80 hours of community service, attend an anti-theft class, and make a donation to Crime Stoppers.

XXX was represented by a very experienced, savvy attorney, but the case was so well prepared that she really could not take the case to trial.  Great job!

Donna M. Hawkins

Special Crimes Bureau

Public Assistance Fraud

Major Theft

Sexually Violent Predator Prosecutions

**Email from HCDA #2**

**From:** Hawkins, Donna [<mailto:HAWKINS_DONNA@dao.hctx.net>]   
**Sent:** Thursday, January 23, 2014 4:04 PM  
**Subject:** successful prosecution!

XXX, cause #, paid the full amount of restitution due ($12,618.14) this morning.  She then pleaded guilty to the lesser offense of attempted aggregate theft, and was sentenced to a year probation/ $500 fine, 100 hours of community service, attending an anti-theft class, and other conditions imposed by the court).

This was a Workforce Solutions childcare benefits fraud case.  The restitution payment will be directed to TWC per standard policy.

Great work!

Donna M. Hawkins

Assistant District Attorney

Special Crimes Division

Sexually Violent Predator Prosecutions

Public Assistance Fraud

(713) 755-5277

Below is an email message from TWC’s OI staff Julia Buenrostro:

**Email from TWC #1**

“WOW Vicki, Congratulations!  OI is so proud of your work in GC.  OI has been touting your good work here in the state office, but now we have it in writing from the horse’s mouth.  It must be incredibly rewarding to hear your work is so highly respected and appreciated by the other officials you work with.

Vicki you really have done some incredible work considering the difficulty of what we do.  I hope GC/NCI is aware of how lucky they are to have you.  You have exhibited a real commitment and passion to protect program funds.

If you don’t mind I would like to share this letter with some of the other Boards.

Thank you again Vicki for all you do for our customers and programs.

Julia Buenrostro, CFE

TWC Office of Investigations

Voice 512-463-2794

FAX   512-936-3280”

Finally, attached is a letter from Harris County District Attorney’s Office, commending Vicki’s excellent work.

Through all of her work Vicki has exemplified I Am Workforce Solutions by understanding and using available resources in conducting fact findings, while conducting herself professionally and carrying out necessary actions by taking the customer’s perspective as a bigger guiding picture. I am nominating Vicki for the customer service award for her awesome teamwork.

Respectfully submitted,

Kayoko Takahashi

Workforce Solutions FAPO