

Berlinger Charges Wide Fraud At Welfare Center for Cubans

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By EDWARD HUDSON

George F. Berlinger, the state's Welfare Inspector General, said yesterday that a review of alleged abuses at a New York City center for dispensing welfare assistance to Cuban refugees showed "an unusually high incidence of fraud" by recipients and laxity by the city's welfare agency.

"Evidence is so obvious in the case records," Mr. Berlinger said at a news conference, "that one must assume it has been deliberately overlooked by the city's employees."

He said reports indicated that recipients were being "coached" by welfare employees and that the welfare agency was intentionally giving "preferential treatment" to Cuban recipients.

He also charged that evidence of fraud in the federally financed program, set up in 1961, was not being passed on to Federal or state Authorities as required.

A spokesman for the city welfare agency, the Department of Social Services, said the agency would "certainly examine" all cases of suspected fraud and error. Fewer than 5,000 of the city's 550,000 welfare cases involved Cuban refugees, he noted.

The state official said his office had started the investigation after getting "numerous" complaints from welfare employees and others regarding alleged abuses at the center, the Herald Special Services Center at 119 West 31st Street.

A review of 90 of the cases about which complaints had been made, Mr. Berlinger said, found that 39 involved fraud by recipients and 33 others involved "major errors by the



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George F. Berlinger, the State Welfare Inspector General, at his news session here yesterday.

city which resulted in improper payments."

Abuses cited by the state official included numerous instances of recipients' concealing income. Agency "errors" included failure to establish a recipient's true address, continuing payment of welfare to a man who moved to Florida and got a job, and giving assistance to a man who quit his job.

Mr. Berlinger emphasized at his news conference, held at his offices at 655 Madison Avenue, near 60th Street, that the information was from case records available to the agency. He said a full investigation might disclose further abuses. He asked Jule M. Sugarman, the city's Human Resources Administrator, to investigate and take "appropriate action."