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Poloncarz: County Losing "Probably Millions" in Welfare Fraud



Chris Caya (2011-03-24)

BUFFALO, NY (WNED) - "Abysmal" is the description Erie County Comptroller Mark Poloncarz uses for the record keeping in the department that's supposed to identify and prevent welfare fraud.

"If this is what you call 'running government like a business,' this business should have been out of business a century ago," said Poloncarz with an obvious dig at his political enemy, County Executive Chris Collins.

The filing system in the Department of Social Services-Special Investigations Division, is "buggy whip-type technology," says Poloncarz.

Auditors were trying to verify if the county received more than \$45 million in welfare repayments in 2008 and 2009 as Social Services claimed.

Poloncarz says it was impossible "to spend countless hours going through 10,000 file cards" used to record welfare claims.

"We are losing at least hundreds of thousands, and probably millions, of dollars in welfare fraud," said Poloncarz.

Starting in late 2010 a computer database was set up for new claims, but cases on file cards did not get put into the system, a development which "boggles the mind," Poloncarz said.

County Executive Chris Collins Spokesman Grant Loomis says Social Services is continually trying to improve its practices.

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County system is "the most ineffective and inefficient business I've ever seen," Poloncarz said.

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