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Fraudulent Certification of Education Awards Leads to Debarment and Disallowed Costs

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DATE ISSUED 10.14.2016

Closed 2016-10-13

This investigation was initiated based on a Hotline allegation that Ms. Meghan Olinger, former AmeriCorps Program Coordinator, Synergy, Education, and Empowerment of West Monroe (SEE), West Monroe, LA, falsely certified education awards for members who had not completed their service hours over the course of her tenure at SEE.

CNCS-OIG investigated the allegations of false certifications of Segal Education Awards by program officials by SEE, a sub-recipient of a grant awarded by CNCS to Volunteer Louisiana (Commission). The investigation determined that Ms. Olinger falsely certified the Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards for 97 AmeriCorps members. Ms. Olinger's actions allowed \$117,202.12 in unearned education awards to be obligated by the CNCS National Service Trust. The investigation also found that the former AmeriCorps Program Director of SEE was negligent in performing her duties as the program director and demonstrated a lack of oversight of the SEE AmeriCorps Program. The Program Director's negligence and lack of oversight allowed for the false certification of 97 Segal Education Awards.

A review of relevant documents and interviews of Ms. Olinger, the Program Director, and SEE staff, and members revealed between 2012 to 2016, Ms. Olinger disregarded the required service hours and allowed ineligible members to receive an unearned education award. During the time in question, the Program Director failed to perform any meaningful oversight of the SEE program, which allowed the mismanagement of the AmeriCorps program to go undetected for several years.

CNCS management informed CNCS-OIG that it disallowed \$117,202.12 for 97 falsely certified education awards and debarred Ms. Olinger for a period of two years. The Commission also disallowed \$37,512.84, for grant years 2012-2014, in match funds.

Case ID: 2016-011

REPORT WASTE FRAUD & ABUSE

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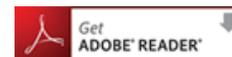
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