



## COMPTROLLER'S INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

# Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

*March 11, 2022*

**Jason E. Mumpower**  
*Comptroller of the Treasury*



**DIVISION OF INVESTIGATIONS**



JASON E. MUMPOWER  
*Comptroller*

March 11, 2022

Marie Williams, Commissioner  
Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
500 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, TN 37243

Commissioner Williams:

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury conducted an investigation of selected records of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, and the results are presented herein.

Copies of this report are being forwarded to Governor Bill Lee, the State Attorney General, the District Attorney General of the 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, certain state legislators, and various other interested parties. A copy of the report is available for public inspection in our Office and may be viewed at <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason E. Mumpower", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jason E. Mumpower  
Comptroller of the Treasury

JEM/MLC

# INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

## TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

The Office of the Comptroller of the Treasury investigated allegations of malfeasance by an employee of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (MHSAS). The investigation was initiated after MHSAS officials reported they discovered that an employee of MHSAS was receiving compensation from a grantee agency for work, some of which she only could have performed during the same hours she was at work at MHSAS. The results of the investigation were communicated with the Office of the District Attorney General of the 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial District.

### BACKGROUND



MHSAS is a department of the State of Tennessee, headquartered in Nashville, whose mission is to provide, plan for, and promote support services for Tennesseans with mental illness and substance abuse issues. To facilitate the delivery of these services, MHSAS enters into grant contracts with nonprofit entities throughout the state. Under such contracts, MHSAS agrees to reimburse service providers for salaries or other specified expenses they incur in the delivery of such services. In addition to defining the scope of services to be provided and setting forth terms related to compensation and other matters, such contracts generally prohibit the payment of any grant funds to employees of MHSAS.

In March 2007, MHSAS employed Gina Morton to work full-time as a Mental Health Program Specialist 3. From at least 2012 through 2018, MHSAS required Morton to work from 9:00am through 5:30pm, Monday through Friday, at MHSAS's headquarters in downtown Nashville.

Unbeknownst to MHSAS, in January 2012, Morton applied for and accepted a position with MHSAS grantee Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System (Volunteer) as a school-based liaison working with high school students. That job required her to be physically present at Holloway High School in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, from 8:00am through 3:00pm when school was in session. Morton did not disclose to MHSAS her employment with Volunteer and did not disclose to Volunteer her continued employment with MHSAS.

In January 2018, Volunteer officials discovered that Morton was employed full-time by MHSAS. Because grant contracts prohibit MHSAS employees from being paid with grant funds, Volunteer reported the grant contract violation to MHSAS and accepted Morton’s resignation. Following an internal MHSAS investigation, during which she was placed on administrative leave, Morton resigned her position with MHSAS effective March 20, 2018.

**RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION**

- MHSAS EMPLOYEE GINA MORTON WRONGFULLY OBTAINED GRANT FUNDS TOTALING AT LEAST \$82,913**

Investigators determined that from January 2012 through January 2018, MHSAS employee Gina Morton made false entries in Volunteer’s timekeeping records to receive at least \$82,913 in pay for work she did not perform. Morton fraudulently represented she had worked at least 6,160 hours for Volunteer, a MHSAS grantee organization, when in fact she was working onsite at MHSAS. Volunteer relied on those false time entries to pay Morton and to obtain reimbursement from MHSAS for the compensation paid to Morton. Information obtained from MHSAS officials, statements made by Morton to MHSAS officials, and documents that were obtained over the course of the investigation established that Morton was working at the MHSAS Nashville office on the same days and at the same time she claimed to have worked at Holloway High School.

**Exhibit 1** sets forth examples of certain dates Morton sought and received compensation for work she claimed to have performed simultaneously in Nashville and Murfreesboro. Over the entire six-year period, Morton’s false entries resulted in Morton being paid \$82,913.60 from Volunteer for work that she did not perform. Volunteer requested and received grant reimbursement from MHSAS for all the school-liaison salary that Volunteer paid Morton.

**Exhibit 1**

*MHSAS Timekeeping System*

Morton,Gina G	9/12/2017	REGS1	7.500000
Morton,Gina G	9/13/2017	REGS1	7.500000
Morton,Gina G	9/14/2017	REGS1	7.500000
Morton,Gina G	9/15/2017	REGS1	7.500000
Morton,Gina G	9/18/2017	REGS1	7.500000
Morton,Gina G	9/19/2017	REGS1	7.500000
Morton,Gina G	9/20/2017	REGS1	7.500000
Morton,Gina G	9/21/2017	REGS1	7.500000
Morton,Gina G	9/22/2017	REGS1	7.500000

*Volunteer Timekeeping System*

MORTON	GINA G.	2017-09-12	R	8
MORTON	GINA G.	2017-09-13	R	8
MORTON	GINA G.	2017-09-14	R	8
MORTON	GINA G.	2017-09-15	R	8
MORTON	GINA G.	2017-09-18	R	8
MORTON	GINA G.	2017-09-19	R	8
MORTON	GINA G.	2017-09-20	R	8
MORTON	GINA G.	2017-09-21	R	8
MORTON	GINA G.	2017-09-22	R	8

*Comparison of time Morton entered for work at MHSAS and Holloway High School for which the dates and times overlapped.*

On February 16, 2022, the Davidson County Grand Jury indicted Gina Morton on one count of Theft over \$60,000 and one count of Forgery.

The charges and allegations contained in the indictment are merely accusations of criminal conduct, and not evidence. The defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt and convicted through due process of law.

[Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Investigative Exhibit](#)