

Federal Enforcement on Falsifying Thousands of Nursing Credentials

[Richard P. Kusserow](#) | April 2023

Key Points:

- **Operation Nightingale was a multi-state coordinated law enforcement effort by the FBI and OIG**
- **Investigations are continuing for those who purchased fraudulent nursing diplomas**

The [DOJ announced](#) more than two dozen individuals were charged in the Southern District of Florida in an ongoing investigation of wire fraud in a scheme to sell fraudulent nursing degree diplomas and transcripts obtained from accredited Florida-based nursing schools to individuals seeking licenses and jobs as registered nurses (RNs) and licensed practical/vocational nurses (LPN/VNs). This massive fraud case was investigated by a joint DOJ federal law enforcement operation led by the FBI and OIG spanning many states, including Florida, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Delaware. More than \$100 million worth of bogus nursing diplomas and transcripts were sold to 7,600 individuals who paid an average of \$15,000 to obtain them. The phony credentials were sold by three South Florida-based nursing schools: Palm Beach School of Nursing in Palm Beach County, FL, Sacred Heart International Institute in Broward County, FL, and Siena College, also in Broward County. These schools are now closed.

The fake credentials enabled individuals to take a shortcut to becoming licensed nurses and bypassing the vital steps of the competency and licensure process to become RNs and LPN/VNs. Once licensed, the individuals could obtain employment in the health care field. The investigation is continuing regarding those who obtained fraudulent diplomas. State licensing authorities nationwide are acting against those who obtained fraudulent diplomas and were subsequently credentialed.

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) [applauded](#) the OIG, FBI, and DOJ for their Operation Nightingale and committed to identifying any additional safeguards and solutions needed to prevent bogus nurses. Compliance Officers may wish to check the diplomas of nurses

employed by their organization to see if they were obtained from the three schools leading the fraud enterprise.

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About the Author

Richard P. Kusserow established Strategic Management Services, LLC, after retiring from being the DHHS Inspector General, and has assisted over 2,000 health care organizations and entities in developing, implementing and assessing compliance programs.