



# Mississippi Department of Human Services

## Press Release

Media Contact: Julia Bryan  
Phone: 601-359-4517  
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### MDHS Investigators SNAP Coast Fraud

*Recent busts net more than \$345,000*

(GULFPORT, Miss.) — In a sweep across the three coastal counties, investigators from the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Program Integrity Fraud unit and law enforcement from Jackson, Harrison and Hancock counties busted SNAP recipients accused of trying to steal from a program that provides assistance to those in need.

In recent months, these same investigators, with help from law enforcement agencies statewide, busted another 34 SNAP clients, including two from Jackson County, with restitution and fines totaling more than \$345,000. Last fiscal year, investigators recovered more than \$358,000 from those attempting to defraud the system.

SNAP and TANF fraud are usually the result of a client withholding income or household information that could deem them ineligible to receive benefits. Disqualification periods for SNAP fraud can range from 12 months for the first violation to permanent disqualification. Ineligibility is determined by state and federal mandates and can be ordered by the courts as part of sentencing.

MDHS Director of Fraud Investigations Kenneth Palmer said, “SNAP is designed to help low-income people put food on the table. SNAP fraud, however, hurts everyone. Local stores where purchases would have been made suffer a loss of revenue and, of course, the family suffers because they are disqualified from a program which would have allowed for appropriate food purchases.”

Small “mom and pop” grocers are usually the type of stores targeted by those trying to defraud a system in place to help those who are at risk of food insecurity, such as the elderly and children. Local residents can help spot fraud in their grocery stores. If you suspect a store owner, clerk or client is misusing SNAP benefits, call the Fraud hotline at 1-800-299-6905. SNAP fraud is a crime.

County	Name	Restitution, Fees, Fines	Sentence	Disqualification Period
Jackson	Hong P. Nguyen	\$ 9,603	5 years probation	12 months
Jackson	Rochelle M. Miskel	\$ 28,219	5 years probation	24 months
Jones	Mable D. Pittman	\$ 14,375	3 years probation	12 months
Jones	Karen Howorth	\$ 11,089	3 years probation	12 months

Hinds	Lyouita Wilson	\$ 11,198	3 years probation	N/A
Hinds	Kyreeta Harris	\$ 13,102	3 years probation	24 months
Hinds	Lenora Knight	\$ 6,276	3 years probation	24 months
Hinds	Marsha Calhoun	\$ 2,000	1 year probation	12 months
Hinds	Phillip Bryant	\$ 1,500	1 year probation	12 months
Hinds	Victoria White	\$ 8,722	3 years probation	12 months
Hinds	Markesha Wells	\$ 6,030	4 years probation	N/A
Lauderdale	William B. Hodges	\$ 7,173	Habitual Offender; 2 years to serve	12 months
Lauderdale	Renita L. Rush	\$ 9,990	5 years probation	12 months
Lowndes	Tujwana Howery	\$ 9,247	3 years probation	12 months
Lee	Latonya Merritt	\$ 8,958	3 years probation	N/A
Madison	Maria Martinez	\$ 6,906	5 years probation	12 months
Madison	April Reed	\$ 9,790	5 years probation	N/A
Madison	Caskie Catchings	\$ 19,086	1 year to serve; 2 years probation	12 months
Madison	Ericka (Erica) Lewis	\$ 6,673	5 years probation	Permanent Disqualification
Marshall	Misty D. Wilson	\$ 6,668	5 years probation	12 months
Marshall	Ellisha A. Walton	\$ 8,018	3 years probation	N/A
Monroe	Penny C. McCrory	\$ 7,957	3 years probation	12 months
Monroe	Lawanda E. Young	\$ 6,240	3 years probation	12 months
Prentiss	Betty Friar	\$ 11,872	3 years probation	12 months
Prentiss	Bryan C. Geyer	\$ 8,734	3 years probation	12 months
Rankin	Lillie Evans	\$ 10,181	5 years probation	12 months
Rankin	Lisa Hallman	\$ 9,017	5 years probation	12 months
Rankin	Melissa Young	\$ 27,394	5 years probation	12 months
Tunica	Pamela Callahan	\$ 8,893	3 years probation	12 months
Winston	Linda A. Gates	\$ 5,549	3 years probation	24 months
Winston	Emily Curry	\$ 7,038	3 years probation	24 months
Webster	Lisa D. Threet	\$ 11,786	3 years probation	12 months
Washington	Elosie Moore	\$ 19,098	3 years probation	12 months
Washington	Nettie Tatum	\$ 6,758	3 years probation	12 months
TOTAL		\$ 345,140		

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