



Mississippi Department of Human Services Press Release



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ROUNDUP OF SNAP BUSTS ACROSS THE STATE

(JACKSON, Miss.) — This spring, investigators from the Mississippi Department of Human Services have been on the move across the state to stop trafficking and fraud of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.

Recent SNAP trafficking arrest includes:

- Lawrence County: Store owner Richard Allen McGuffee and clerk Sherry Elaine McGuffee, both of Monticello, were arrested and charged with trafficking benefits at the Center Grocery located on 218 E. Lincoln Road in Monticello. The pair fraudulently exchanged \$7,219.24 in SNAP benefits for ineligible food items or cash.

Recent SNAP fraud convictions include:

- Tate County: Felicia McGhee of Coldwater was indicted by the Tate County Grand Jury and found guilty. She was ordered pay \$5,781 in restitution and fines with three years of supervised probation. McGhee will be permanently disqualified from receiving SNAP benefits as this was her third program violation.
- Hinds County: Martha A. Dulaney of Jackson was indicted by the Hinds County Grand Jury. She entered a guilty plea and was ordered pay \$11,000 in restitution with three years of probation subject to successful completion of the non-adjudication program. Dulaney is ineligible to receive SNAP benefits for a 12 month period.
- Wayne County: Jamanelle J. McQueen of Waynesboro was indicted by the Wayne County Grand Jury for SNAP fraud. She entered a guilty plea and was ordered pay \$10,781 in restitution, fines and fees with three years of probation subject to successful completion of the non-adjudication program. McQueen is also disqualified from receiving benefits for a 12 month period.

SNAP trafficking investigations are aimed at preventing the illegal use, transfer or trafficking of SNAP benefits, with the focus of investigations on retailers who are authorized to accept benefits through EBT purchases but instead exchange benefits for cash and/or ineligible goods such as non-food items. Retailers arrested for trafficking are not only charged but lose eligibility to accept any future EBT benefits at that store location. Further, clients who participate in trafficking are charged and potentially lose their benefits. All can face fines and jail time.

SNAP fraud is usually the result of the client withholding income or household information that would deem them ineligible to receive welfare benefits. Disqualification periods are determined by state and federal mandates and/or can be ordered by the court. Disqualification periods are normally 12 months for the first violation, 24 months for the second violation and permanent disqualification from the program for a subsequent violation.

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SNAP FACTS FOR STATE FISCAL YEAR 2011:

- Lawrence County-19.3% of county residents received SNAP representing over \$3.5 million in benefits issued.
- Tate County-19.6% of county residents received SNAP representing over \$7.7 million in benefits issued.
- Hinds County-26.1% of county residents received SNAP representing over \$98.8 million in benefits issued.
- Wayne County-25.3% of county residents received SNAP representing over \$7.1 million in benefits issued.
- Statewide-21.4% of state residents received SNAP representing over \$902.2 million in benefits issued.

“Greed by a few has cost the honest low-income families a local grocery store in Monticello that can accept their EBT cards. This crime penalizes all who may have used this local shop for eligible EBT food purchases. The trickle down of effect of SNAP trafficking is huge, particularly in rural small-town Mississippi. The crime affects the whole area,” said MDHS Director of Special Investigations Frank Saddler. “We want store owners to know that we are watching them and if they choose to scam the system, they will be caught.”

Additionally, said Director of Fraud Investigations Kenneth Palmer, “The program is designed to help low-income people put food on the table. So when someone is disqualified from receiving SNAP benefits, everyone suffers. The local store where purchases would have been made loses revenue and, of course, the family suffers because of the loss of benefits that would have allowed for food purchases. It hurts everyone who would have benefited from the program.”

Local residents can help spot possible fraud in their grocery stores. The 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.

If you suspect a store owner, clerk or client is misusing benefits, call the Fraud Hotline at 1-800-299-6905. SNAP fraud is a crime.

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