

## ***USDA Food and Nutrition Service***

### **USDA Efforts to Reduce Waste, Fraud and Abuse in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

**Americans support helping struggling families put food on the table but they want to know that taxpayer dollars are being spent wisely.** Correcting mistakes, and rooting out waste, fraud and abuse so that Federal dollars are used wisely is not just a top priority for this Administration, it is common sense. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is actively working on behalf of American taxpayers to protect the Federal investment in SNAP and make sure the program is targeted towards those families who need it the most. To further this effort, FNS focuses on three key areas of oversight:

**Reducing Improper Payments and Errors:** FNS takes seriously its responsibility to make sure that only those families who are actually eligible for the program participate, and that the correct amount of benefits is provided to them. Over the past decade, FNS has made major strides to improve the accuracy of SNAP's eligibility determination and benefit payment systems.

- *SNAP's Quality Control (QC) system earns a solid "A" grade.* Over 98% of those receiving SNAP benefits are eligible and payment accuracy was 95.64%--a historic high.
- *Reducing errors saves valuable resources.* Payment errors are less than half what they were ten years ago, which has reduced improper payments by \$2.7 billion in 2009.

**Pursuing Recipient Fraud:** While it occurs relatively infrequently, FNS recognizes that program fraud undermines public confidence in government and jeopardizes the ability of SNAP to serve the tens of millions of struggling families who need it the most. FNS works through our State partners to investigate recipient fraud and hold bad actors accountable, and recipients who purposely commit fraud to get benefits are subject to disqualification.

- *Fraud investigations yield results for taxpayers.* In fiscal year 2010, States conducted 782,945 fraud investigations, disqualified 44,483 individuals, and collected \$287 million in recipient claims (\$67.2 million of which was related to fraud.)
- The Federal government has collected more than \$1.3 billion in delinquent SNAP recipient claims since 1992.

**Combating Abuse and Misuse of Benefits:** The sale/purchase of SNAP benefits for cash is called trafficking, an illegal activity punishable by criminal prosecution. Over the last 15 years, FNS has aggressively implemented a number of measures to reduce the prevalence of trafficking in SNAP from 4 percent down to its current level of 1 percent. FNS also continues to work closely with its State and Federal partners to investigate and prosecute trafficking.

- *Trafficking is not tolerated.* In 2010, 42 FNS investigators around the country conducted nearly 5000 undercover investigations.
- *Bad actors are removed from the program.* Over the last ten years, 8045 retail stores were permanently disqualified due to trafficking.

**Accountability in SNAP is our ongoing responsibility and critical to its public support.**

FNS will continue to identify ways to improve program integrity in SNAP. When almost \$65 billion in benefits annually are involved, diligence and attention are required. FNS is committed

to working with our State and Federal partners on strategies to improve accuracy, identify and address fraud, while ensuring access and customer service.