



APR 09 2012

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

3101 Park  
Center Drive

Alexandria, VA  
22302-1500

Mr. Mark Zuckerberg  
Chief Executive Officer  
Facebook Inc.  
1601 S. California Avenue  
Palo Alto, California 94304

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg:

The Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service, the Federal agency responsible for administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, requests your assistance. The USDA has determined that the sale or offer to sell SNAP benefits in public or online is an intentional program violation and has issued policy guidance to that effect (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/2011/100411.pdf>). We have received complaints that individuals are using Facebook accounts to post advertisements and make offers to buy or sell SNAP benefits.

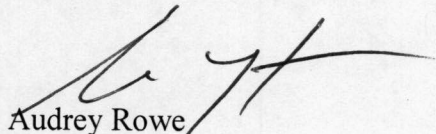
SNAP benefits are United States Government obligations that are stored on State-issued Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. In accordance with Section 5 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, 7 U.S.C. § 2014, EBT cards with SNAP benefits are only issued to households that have been certified as eligible to participate in the Program. SNAP benefits may only be used by a SNAP recipient to purchase eligible food, as defined in 7 U.S.C. § 2012(k); any other use of SNAP benefits, including the posting of SNAP benefits for sale on the Internet, violates the Act and its regulations and, as stated above, may be subject to criminal penalties. *See* 7 U.S.C. § 2024(b); 7 CFR 274.7(a). Moreover, the continued efforts by unscrupulous individuals to use Facebook as a means to conduct illegal activities adversely impacts the integrity and image of SNAP, as well as the intent of your website.

We consulted with our Office of General Counsel and, based on those discussions, are hereby requesting that Facebook post a notice regarding the illegality of buying or selling SNAP benefits on its website and/or that buying or selling SNAP benefits be added to your Statement of Rights and Responsibilities as a violation of those rights and responsibilities. Also, we ask for your assistance in monitoring activity on Facebook to identify and remove posts from individuals attempting to engage in buying or selling SNAP benefits, more commonly referred to on your site by users as "Food Stamps" or "EBT". In addition, while we realize that Facebook maintains a data use policy to protect the privacy of its users, we ask that if you have public information of the buyers and sellers' names, addresses and/or phone numbers, to please send the information to USDA and we will forward it to our Office of Inspector General for investigation.

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We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions or information to share, please contact Ronald Ward by phone at 703-305-2523 or email at [Ronald.Ward@fns.usda.gov](mailto:Ronald.Ward@fns.usda.gov).

Sincerely,



Audrey Rowe  
Administrator  
Food and Nutrition Service