



# PRESS RELEASE

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## Utah Agencies Collaborate to Stop Retail Food Stamp Fraud

SALT LAKE CITY March 31, 2016 – On Wednesday, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) served multiple search warrants in a collaborative investigation into suspected retail food stamp fraud. The OAG investigation was conducted in collaboration with the Office of the State Auditor (OSA), the Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS), the United States Department of Agriculture’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) and Salt Lake County Unified Police Department.

The statewide effort is part of an ongoing effort to cut down on food stamp fraud and protect taxpayers’ dollars.

“Food stamp fraud is a difficult problem to track, but cooperation with the Office of the State Auditor, Department of Workforce Services, the Office of the Inspector General, and the Unified Police Department has helped to save the state millions of dollars and assure that tax dollars are used to help those who are most in need,” said Attorney General Sean Reyes. “We look forward to continued collaboration.”

“We’ve appreciated the opportunity to work with the Department of Workforce Services and the Office of the Attorney General to initiate a new level of collaboration for detecting and investigating food stamp fraud,” said State Auditor John Dougall. “Leveraging data analytics of high-risk activities can help guide investigative efforts. Protecting taxpayers’ money is a top priority for my office.”

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), more commonly known as “food stamps,” is a federal program administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. DWS determines the eligibility of individuals who qualify for food stamps and investigates fraud cases at the individual level. When retail fraud is suspected, DWS contacts OIG to investigate. OIG determines whether cases should be investigated at the federal or state level. When investigated by the state, applicable state agencies collaborate to levy the necessary evidence to arrest and prosecute suspects.

“Our top priorities in eliminating any kind of food stamp fraud are education and prevention,” said Jon Pierpont, Executive Director of DWS. “However, when we suspect fraud, we aggressively take steps to stop the abuse and recover tax dollars that belong to the people.”

To learn more about offenses involving federal food stamps benefits, visit [www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/foodstamp.PDF](http://www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/foodstamp.PDF). If you suspect food stamp fraud is being committed, please call 1-800-955-2210 or email [wsinv@utah.gov](mailto:wsinv@utah.gov).

Please contact Nicole Toomey Davis with any questions for the Office of the State Auditor at [ndavis@utah.gov](mailto:ndavis@utah.gov) or 801-678-4835 and Nate McDonald with any questions for the Department of Workforce Services at 801-694-0294.

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