



## Offenses Involving Federal Food Stamp Benefits

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), under cooperative Federal-State agreements, issues Food Stamp Program benefits in the form of paper food coupons, commonly known as food stamps, and through Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), to provide nutrition for low-income families. Food stamp benefits can only be used to buy food by individuals meeting specific eligibility requirements, and only at stores authorized by USDA to accept food stamp benefits.

Food stamps are printed in color in denominations of \$1 (brown), \$5 (purple), and \$10 (green), and are distributed in books of total value of \$2, \$7, \$10, \$40, \$50, and \$65. The \$5 food stamp illustrated below has been reduced to approximately 50% its actual size.

EBT cards are access devices which resemble bank debit cards and are used in some States to electronically access food stamp benefits. As States convert from paper food stamps to EBT, an EBT card will be issued to benefit recipients. Each State, or group of States, may have a State-specific EBT card design. A generic EBT card, reduced to approximately 75% its actual size, is depicted to the right.

Possession or use of food stamps or an EBT access device by unauthorized persons, or by authorized persons in a manner not authorized by the Secretary of



Agriculture, violates the Food Stamp Act (7 U.S.C. 2024). One of the most common forms of food stamp fraud, known as food stamp trafficking, involves the illegal buying or selling of food stamp benefits for cash, drugs, weapons or other items of value. Unlawful possession or use of food stamp benefits in an amount of \$100 or more is a felony; less than \$100 is a misdemeanor.

The Office of Inspector General (OIG), USDA, investigates criminal violations of the Food Stamp Act. Information concerning trafficking by retailers, theft of food stamps from issuance offices, or other criminal violations of the Food Stamp Act should be reported to the OIG Regional Office having jurisdiction over the area. The address and telephone number for these offices, along with the States and Territories they cover, are listed on the reverse.

Some retailers violate the Food Stamp Program by accepting food stamp benefits for the sale of unauthorized items such as tobacco, alcohol and paper products. This type of activity should be reported directly to the nearest office of the Food and Nutrition Service, USDA. The telephone numbers for these offices can be found in the Government pages of your local telephone book.

In addition to the violations noted above, many individuals falsely report their eligibility criteria in order to receive food stamp benefits. These program violations should be reported to the State or local social services authorities responsible for administering the Food Stamp Program in that area.



## OIG REGIONS

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### **Northeast Region.....**

USDA, Office of Inspector General  
26 Federal Plaza, Room 1409  
New York, N.Y. 10278-0004  
(212) 264-8400 **Fax** (212) 264-8416

**Territories:** Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont

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### **Northeast Region.....**

USDA, Office of Inspector General  
5601 Sunnyside Ave, Suite 2-2230  
Stop 5300  
Beltsville, MD 20705-5300  
(301) 504-2000 **Fax** (301) 504-2025

**Territories:** Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia

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### **Southeast Region.....**

USDA, Office of Inspector General  
401 W. Peachtree Street, NW, Room 2329  
Atlanta, GA 30308-3519  
(404) 730-3170 **Fax** (404) 730-3181

**Territories:** Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, and the Virgin Islands

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### **Midwest Region.....**

USDA, Office of Inspector General  
111 N. Canal Street, Suite 1130  
Chicago, IL 60606-7295  
(312) 353-1358 **Fax** (312) 353-8963

**Territories:** Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Eastern Wisconsin, and Northern Illinois

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### **Southwest Region.....**

USDA, Office of Inspector General  
101 South Main, Room 311  
Temple, TX 76501-7651  
(254) 743-6535 **Fax** (254) 298-1358

**Territories:** Arizona, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Nevada, (Las Vegas, Clark County), Oklahoma, and Texas

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### **Western Region.....**

USDA, Office of Inspector General  
75 Hawthorne Street, Suite 200  
San Francisco, CA 94105-3920  
(415) 744-2887 **Fax** (415) 744-2896

**Territories:** Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington, Guam, and the Pacific Trust

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