

Former State Workers Indicted and Arrested For Theft From Aid Program

Attorney General Matt Denn announced today the arrests and indictments of seven former state of Delaware employees for theft of federal money. All seven were employed by the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and were responsible for issuing Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, and three previous arrests were also related to the same investigation.

Two of the defendants were indicted and arrested last week, two others were indicted and remain at large, one was indicted and arrested previously and still faces charges, and two have already been convicted and sentenced.

Based on internal audits conducted by DHSS's Audit and Recovery Management Services, investigators learned of fictitious and unauthorized EBT accounts created by Division of Social Services case workers responsible for case creation and maintenance, with each of the fraudulently created cases issued varying amounts of food benefits in the form of EBT cards. The investigation revealed that the fraudulent EBT cards were delivered to State Service Centers in New Castle and Kent County, and intercepted by the suspects working at those locations. Once intercepted, the cards were personally used or sold at a discount.

These indictments are the result of a months-long joint effort of prosecutors and investigators from the Department of Justice's Criminal Division, Fraud Division and the Office of Civil Rights and Public Trust, along with the DHSS Audit and Recovery Management Services. The investigation eventually revealed more than \$959,000 in total fraudulent benefits

issued by several state workers.

“This case is part of an intensified focus our office is trying to bring to fraud being committed against the state’s public benefit programs,” Attorney General Matt Denn said. “These arrests come as the result of an in-depth investigation, supported by many agencies. We appreciate the cooperation from the Office of the Inspector General and the Audit and Recovery Management Services. From the Department of Justice, I specifically want to thank Deputy Attorneys General Matt Frawley, Phillip Casale, Allison Reardon and Dennis Kelleher, along with Special Investigators Robert Irwin, Brittney Ketler, Frank Robinson, and John Ciritella.”

Indicted and arrested last week were:

- Detrich Simmons-Heath, 54, of Chestertown, Maryland – charged with Theft over \$100,000, Forgery First Degree, Falsifying Business Records, and Official Misconduct. Released on \$6,000 unsecured bond.
- Kamilah Laws, 39, of Wilmington – charged with Theft over \$50,000, Forgery First Degree, Falsifying Business Records, and Official Misconduct. Released on \$5,000 unsecured bond.

Indicted last week and still at large are:

- Jo Ellen Edwards, 61, of Felton – charged with Theft over \$100,000, Forgery First Degree, Falsifying Business Records, and Official Misconduct.
- Shirlene Davis, 29, of Newark – charged with Theft over \$100,000, Forgery First Degree, Falsifying Business Records, and Official Misconduct.

Previously indicted, charges pending:

- Nicole Stevens, 43, of Dover, was arrested in November 2015 on charges of Theft over \$1,500, Official Misconduct, Forgery First Degree, Falsifying Business

Records, and four counts of Unlawful Use of a Payment Card for stealing \$8,092.

Previously convicted and sentenced:

- Allison Rivera, 49, of Dover, pled guilty to Theft over \$1,500, Unlawful Use of a Payment Card, and Falsifying Business Records, and was sentenced in April 2016 to two years of Level II probation, and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$27,751.58.
- Angelette Brown, 45, of Camden, pled guilty to Theft over \$1,500, Unlawful Use of a Payment Card, and Official Misconduct and was sentenced to April 2016 to two years of Level II probation, ordered to do 240 hours of community service, and forced to repay the \$15,957 she took.

In all cases, defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.