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## Department of Social Services

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### PENALTIES FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FRAUD CAN BE SEVERE

Public assistance for Child Care Subsidy, Energy Assistance programs, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), Medicaid, and Work First programs are intended to help low income individuals and families to meet basic needs. In North Carolina, the local county Department of Social Services (DSS) accepts applications, collects information, and determines eligibility for these programs.

Taxpayers want to know that their tax dollars are being spent appropriately. To meet those expectations, DSS Income Maintenance Caseworkers vigorously work to collect accurate and truthful information from applicants when determining eligibility for benefits. However, with nearly \$3 million a month in FNS benefits in Randolph County alone, there is a risk of fraudulent activity.

Randolph County DSS has a Program Integrity Unit that works diligently to ensure *individual* fraud is identified and prevented, or money recovered. Last fiscal year, fraud collections in Randolph County totaled \$339,635.

Program Integrity Investigators are charged with investigating alleged fraud cases and they are always striving to improve the stewardship of taxpayer money. Their activity is focused on reducing recipient fraud, monitoring and working to stop trafficking of FNS benefits, and ensuring accurate eligibility.

The state investigates reports of fraud by vendors and providers.

Penalties for public assistance fraud can be severe. A person found guilty of public assistance fraud can be fined, placed in jail, or both. People guilty of Food and Nutrition Services fraud may get an even stiffer penalty. In addition to all of the above, one may not be allowed to get Food and Nutrition Services for:

- One year for first offense or two years for first time court finding of purchasing illegal drugs with Food and Nutrition Services Benefits
- Two years for second offense.
- **Permanently** for third offense.
- Ten years for misrepresenting identity or residence to get FNS benefits in more than one place

Randolph County DSS takes public assistance fraud seriously. Please report instances of fraud to your local DSS. In Randolph County, call the Fraud Prevention Hotline at (336) 683-8198.

P.O. Box 3239, Asheboro, North Carolina 27204

[www.randolphcountync.gov/Departments/Social-Services](http://www.randolphcountync.gov/Departments/Social-Services)

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