



# News Release

Timothy Jeffries, Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**April 13, 2016**

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## **DES Office of Inspector General Arrests Clients for Benefit Fraud** *Operation Desert Spring*

**PHOENIX** – Director Timothy Jeffries today announced the DES Office of Inspector General (OIG) located and arrested two fugitives charged with committing client fraud of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The new initiative called “Operation Desert Spring” is coordinated by the DES Office of Inspector General (OIG) and designed to locate fugitive felons who were alleged to or convicted of committing SNAP benefit fraud.

Ms. Maria Reza was arrested for the felony charges of Unlawful Use of Food Stamps, Fraudulent Schemes and Practices, and Felony Theft. She is suspected of committing SNAP fraud, resulting in the loss of \$2,812.00. Ms. Reza failed to appear in court for a preliminary hearing. Therefore, an arrest bench warrant was issued. Mr. Dominic Leija was arrested for the felony charges of Unlawful Use of Food Stamps, Fraudulent Schemes and Practices, and Felony Theft. He was convicted of committing SNAP fraud, resulting in the loss of \$3,333.00. Mr. Leija failed to appear in court for sentencing and an arrest bench warrant was issued.

“When individuals are arrested under the suspicion of committing fraud and fail to appear in court to face the consequences of their actions, that’s completely unacceptable,” said Director Timothy Jeffries. “Under Operation Desert Spring, we are ensuring people are held accountable. If allowed to remain in public arena without being held responsible for their alleged crimes, there is nothing to stop them from continuing to commit these crimes. Our Office of Inspector General is vigilant about tracking them down and taking them into custody so they can answer to the courts for their actions.”

“This operation is a clear indication of the Office of Inspector General’s commitment to maintaining the integrity of DES programs and services,” said Inspector General Juan J. Arcellana. “We are sending a clear signal to all Arizonans that any type of illegal conduct will not be tolerated. This operation is a critical component to DES’ overall efforts in protecting the clients we serve.”

Operation Desert Spring involves OIG Investigative staff locating the fugitives at their personal residences or places of employment to execute the arrest warrants and take the fugitives in custody. The operation also involves the cooperation and assistance of the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS). DES OIG thanks the AZ Department of Public Safety (DPS) for assistance with the operation.

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