

Timothy Jeffries, Director

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## Peoria Resident Sentenced for Food Stamp Fraud

*Venny Jeannie Ferrell ordered to pay restitution*

**PHOENIX** – Director Timothy Jeffries today announced the DES Office of Inspector General (OIG) conducted a successful investigation into public benefits fraud by Venny Jeannie Ferrell of Peoria, Arizona. On June 25, 2015, charges were filed with the Maricopa County Superior Court for three counts of Unlawful Use of Food Stamps; one count Fraudulent Schemes and Practices; and one count Theft. Ms. Ferrell was sentenced on June 3, 2016, in Maricopa County Superior Court.

“There is nothing more detestable than stealing from the poor,” said Director Tim Jeffries. “Our vow to taxpayers, clients and colleagues alike, is to uphold the integrity of the system to ensure these precious dollars go to those who desperately need them. For someone to purposefully take advantage of the system and for their own gain, is absolutely disgraceful.”

“Fraud on any level is unacceptable,” said Inspector General Juan J. Arcellana. “The OIG will continue its efforts to ensure that taxpayer funds are used appropriately and responsibly.”

Between April 2011 and May 2012, Venny Ferrell submitted falsified information regarding her monthly income and employment status to DES in order to receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits. The evidence of the investigation showed that Ms. Ferrell was gainfully employed during the time she submitted the falsified applications. Due to the non-disclosure of her employment, Ms. Ferrell received \$11,180 of TANF and SNAP benefits she was not entitled to receive.

Ms. Ferrell was offered and accepted a plea of Unlawful Use of Food Stamps in violation of A.R.S. § 13-3701 (A)(1) – a Class 6 Undesignated felony. The plea agreement requires her to pay \$11,180, in restitution to DES, as well as service 40 hours of community service. Ms. Ferrell was ordered to report to the Maricopa County Probation Office to begin a two-year period of supervised probation.

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