



# Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Joseph H. Hogsett  
Southern District of Indiana**

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## **HOGSETT ANNOUNCES SENTENCING OF INDIANAPOLIS MAN FOR ROLE IN FSSA FRAUD SCHEME**

*Former FSSA case worker stole more than \$125,000, traded benefit cards for drugs*

### PRESS RELEASE

INDIANAPOLIS – Joseph H. Hogsett, the United States Attorney, announced this afternoon the sentencing of Robert Edwards, age 37, of Indianapolis, to 41 months (3 years, 5 months) in prison following a hearing before federal Judge Sarah Evans Barker. Prior to being sentenced, Edwards entered a plea of guilty to charges that he had defrauded various government programs while working at the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA).

“Every single time one of these cards was made, Mr. Edwards victimized Hoosiers – the legitimate cardholder, hardworking taxpayers, and all public employees,” Hogsett said. “I hope this prosecution makes clear that there is no such thing as an acceptable level of fraud or waste in government, and this office will continue to be aggressive in identifying and prosecuting anyone violating the public’s trust.”

Documents filed in court today indicate that from December 2008 through April 2010, Edwards and his alleged co-defendant engaged in a complex scheme to defraud Hoosier taxpayers. Edwards, a case worker for FSSA in Indianapolis, would work with his alleged co-defendant, Timberly Snyder, a fellow FSSA employee, to identify individuals currently receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Food Stamp benefits, specifically targeting those with unused balances in their benefits accounts. Edwards and his alleged co-defendant would then generate a debit card providing access to that individual’s benefits account.

All told, Edwards was responsible for fraudulently creating at least 62 electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards with a total value of \$125,816.40. Of that amount, \$74,389.17 was stolen from the Food Stamp program and \$51,427.23 was stolen from TANF. During that same time period, it is alleged that Edwards’ co-defendant was responsible for creating roughly 60 additional EBT cards with a total value of roughly \$60,000.

New court filings today also revealed for the first time that the investigation into this scheme was initiated after Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department investigators uncovered evidence that federal benefits cards were being illegally trafficked in the city. Specifically, in March 2010, a known drug dealer that was under investigation was found by IMPD officers to be in possession of a cell phone that contained text messages between the dealer and Edwards discussing the trade of fraudulent benefits debit cards for drugs. Edwards has since admitted that at times he did trade fraudulently created cards for cocaine.

Importantly, once these cards were fraudulently generated, any legitimate card held by the actual beneficiary was automatically deactivated in the FSSA computer system and could no longer be used. Court documents filed today revealed that in some cases, these victims had reported to FSSA that they were unable to receive their TANF or Food Stamp benefits during this period of time because of the fraudulent deactivation of their accounts.

FSSA administers both the TANF program and Food Stamp program for Indiana beneficiaries on behalf of the United States Government. Funding for the TANF program is provided to FSSA by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), while funding for the Food Stamp program is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). All three government agencies participated in this collaborative investigation.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew J. Rinka, who prosecuted the case for the government, Edwards was ordered by Judge Barker to make full restitution to the government in the amount of \$185,717.22, and was also sentenced to 3 years of supervised release at the end of his prison term. A change of plea and sentencing hearing in the matter of Timberly Snyder is currently scheduled for June 25, 2012, at 2:00pm before Judge Barker.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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