The Office of Public Benefits Integrity (OPBI) is responsible for investigating public assistance fraud or misuse regarding the SNAP (food assistance), TANF (cash assistance), and Medicaid programs by individuals or merchants. DCF is dedicated to preventing, detecting, and recovering waste, fraud and abuse within the public assistance programs. Any time fraud is uncovered, OPBI refers the suspected fraud to the Department of Financial Services' Division of Public Assistance Fraud and appropriate law enforcement for criminal investigation.

Individuals found guilty of fraud will be required to pay the money back. If they fail to return the money the Office of Public Benefits Integrity can intercept lottery winnings, tax returns as well as other revenue sources. The administrative penalties, in addition to any criminal penalties the individual may serve, for fraud are:

    1st offense: 12 month disqualification from receiving benefits
    2nd offense: 24 month disqualification from receiving benefits
    3rd offense: lifetime disqualification from receiving benefits

DCF's OPBI is considered a national leader in the detection and prevention in waste, fraud, and abuse in the federal programs DCF administers. Since 2013, OPBI front-end fraud investigators have completed nearly 95,000 public assistance investigations resulting in $134.7 million in cost avoidance savings. Through the use of cutting edge technologies, OPBI has prevented another $843.7 million in taxpayer dollars that have not been lost due to waste, fraud, and abuse. OPBI benefit recovery staff have processed 143,000 referrals, established $160.6 million in claims, and have collected $91.3 in benefit overpayments. For every $1 expended by the state investigating fraud, the benefit integrity program returned $17.73 in cost avoidance.

DCF remains committed to working with the task force to ensure that benefits illegally used are recovered through the benefit recovery program. If anyone is aware of someone who should not be receiving public assistance, report potential public assistance fraud online at www.myflfamilies.com/reportfraud.