



NEWS RELEASE

Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes
Passaic County Prosecutor's Office
401 Grand Street
Paterson, NJ 07505
(973) 881-4800

PASSAIC COUNTY BOARD OF SOCIAL SERVICES EMPLOYEE CHARGED WITH UNAUTHORIZED USE OF FOOD STAMP FUNDS

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY:

April 21, 2017

Passaic County Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes announces the arrest of Carol Austin, age 61, of Paterson, New Jersey.

Carol Austin was arrested without incident on April 21, 2017. The arrest was made by the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office with the assistance of the North East Regional Office of the Inspector General for the United States Department of Agriculture. Ms. Austin was charged on the same date at the Passaic County Prosecutor's Office in Totowa with one count of second degree Impersonation/Theft of Identity in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:21-17; one count of third degree Theft by Deception in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:20-4; and one count of fourth degree Unauthorized Use of Food Stamp Coupons in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:20-36. Second degree Impersonation/Identity Theft involves five (5) or more victims, and carries a maximum term of ten years in New Jersey State Prison. Third degree Theft by Deception ranges from \$500 up to \$75,000, and carries a maximum term of five years in New Jersey State Prison. Fourth degree Unauthorized Use of Food Stamp Coupons involves value of \$150 or more, and carries a maximum term of eighteen months in New Jersey State Prison. The charges were placed on a summons and no bail was required to be set.

On or about November 2015 until February 2017, Ms. Austin allegedly used food stamp benefits contained on Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards that did not belong to her and that she did not have authorization to use. She allegedly used EBT accounts of at least five (5) people and used the funds for herself in an amount exceeding \$500. During the timeframe of the alleged offenses, Ms. Austin was employed as a clerk by the Passaic County Board of Social Services.

EBT cards are issued by the Passaic County Board of Social Services to low-income individuals for the purpose of assisting them in purchasing food. The program is funded by the

United States Department of Agriculture under the Federal Food Stamp program. Only authorized recipients are permitted to use the cards.

The investigation in this matter remains ongoing. At this time, further information will not be released so as not to jeopardize the safety of persons involved or to jeopardize the investigation in progress.

Media inquiries should be directed to Chief Assistant Prosecutor Mary Catherine Ryan at mryan@passaiccountynj.org. Any inquiries as to Ms. Austin's employment status should be directed to the Passaic County Board of Social Services.

The Passaic County Prosecutor's Office asks anyone with additional information about this incident to contact us on our tips line at 1-877-370-PCPO or tips@passaiccountynj.org.

A criminal complaint is merely an accusation. Despite this accusation, the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.



Carol Austin