

Dept. of Health Services: Urges FoodShare members to protect themselves from fraud

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The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is actively investigating several reports from FoodShare members about compromised QUEST card benefits, and urges all members to take action now to protect themselves against fraud. DHS urges FoodShare members to do the following to help protect QUEST card benefits:

- Check the accuracy of account information by calling [the agency that issues your FoodShare benefits](#).
- Monitor account balances using the [MyACCESS mobile app](#) or ebtEdge [website\(link is external\)](#) or [mobile app\(link is external\)](#).
- Add or change optional account passwords to limit unauthorized access.
- Change Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) often by calling QUEST Card Service at 877-415-5164.
- Do not share account passwords and PINs with anyone who is not part of your household.
- Report lost or stolen cards immediately to QUEST Card Service at 877-415-5164.

“Cases of fraud involving public benefits, like FoodShare, are growing nationwide,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “We urge our members to use these recommendations to protect themselves and their benefits from individuals whose scams are getting increasingly sophisticated.”

Upon receiving reports of suspected fraud, the DHS Office of Inspector General and Division of Medicaid Services immediately began mitigation efforts to limit the impact for FoodShare members and to protect Wisconsin taxpayers, including:

actively monitoring system and individual account activity; reissuing compromised QUEST cards; and replacing lost benefits for affected members.

DHS is working with state and national partners to determine if any out-of-state purchases were made using misappropriated funds.

DHS issues benefits to members on QUEST cards, also known as Electronic Balance Transfer (EBT) cards. QUEST cards offer the safety and convenience of a debit card for the purchase of approved food items from participating stores, online retailers, and farmers markets.

If FoodShare members become a victim of fraud, they may lose the ability to use their QUEST Card balance, temporarily preventing them from using their FoodShare benefits to purchase food until balances are replaced. If the fraud continues and is not caught early, members may risk losing benefits until it is reported.

DHS also urges Foodshare members to create unique passwords and PINs that cannot be easily guessed. For passwords, members should avoid using email addresses and the names of family members and pets. For PINs, members should avoid using repeating numbers, such as 0000, or numbers in a row, like 2345.

“Wisconsin FoodShare members should protect their QUEST card information the same way that they should protect their debit and credit cards,” said DHS Inspector General Anthony Baize. “Regularly changing passwords and PINs is key, as is remembering to never share this information with anyone that is not part of their household.”

The DHS Office of the Inspector General protects Wisconsin taxpayers by tracking and preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in DHS-administered public assistance programs, and has helped save millions of tax dollars annually since it was established in October 2011.

Because the misuse of public funds affects each person who lives in Wisconsin, OIG encourages everyone to report suspected fraud, waste, and abuse at 877-865-3432 or www.reportfraud.wisconsin.gov(link is external).