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## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### EBT CARD SKIMMING ON THE RISE IN GLENN COUNTY

The Glenn County Health & Human Services Agency warns of a recent rise in EBT card skimming. Over the past weekend, a number of reports of EBT card skimming have been reported to the Agency.

EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) Card skimming occurs when thieves place an illegal device atop or over a retailer's card-swiping machine at gas stations, retail outlets, and even bank ATMs, to copy EBT card information as it is being swiped by customers. Criminals then use the information obtained to make fake EBT cards and subsequently drain those customer's accounts of the benefits coded on that card (these include CalFRESH benefits, formerly known as "Food Stamps", as well as Cash Aid benefits). Customers don't know they've been victimized until they go to use their EBT card for their next purchase – and discover most, or all, of their money is gone.

"Since Monday, over 30 customers have reported to the Agency that their EBT account balances have disappeared over the weekend," said Bill Wathen, Assistant Director for the Agency. "This amounts to over \$26,000 in stolen benefits...money desperately needed by these low-income families to buy food and pay for the essentials of raising their children."

Upon the agency's notification of the theft of benefits, HHSA staff immediately close the old account, destroy the old EBT card, re-issue a new EBT card to the victims and re-code the lost benefit amounts on that new card. A report is also filed by staff to the State Department of Social Services as well, for appropriate action to be taken at that level. If any customers of the HHSA discover their benefits have "disappeared" from off their EBT card, please contact the relevant caseworker and report the incident. Staff will work immediately with that customer to restore their stolen benefits.

The HHSA reminds customers that they may take actions to reduce the likelihood of having their benefits stolen by (1) avoiding simple PINs (Personal Identification Numbers) such as 1111, 1234, etc.; (2) keep PIN and card numbers secret by not sharing with anyone outside their household; (3) cover the keypad when entering PINs on any machine; (4) changing their PIN often, preferably right before their benefit issuance date; (5) never sharing their PIN or Card Number over the phone or via text to anyone (no County Agency, State Agency, or EBT processors will ever request this data over the phone or via text); (6) check their EBT account regularly for unauthorized charges and, if detected, change their PIN immediately to stop thieves from making further purchases or withdrawals and contact their caseworker at the Agency for restoration of stolen benefits. Additionally, any device that is used for swiping an EBT card can always be double-checked by a quick tug or pull on the plastic outer shell to ensure there is not a false overlay atop that device and, if discovered, contact the management of that retailer, gas station, or bank ATM immediately.