

UNITED COUNCIL ON WELFARE FRAUD

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PRESIDENT'S BLOG



The last newsletter I posted referenced an upcoming trip to Washington, D.C., in February/March 2023. I have included an article about this trip in this quarter's newsletter.

On April 24, 2023, Dawn Royal and Andrew McClenahan met with Raquel Echeverria, FNS SNAP State Administration Branch, Kathryn Fernandez, Muniyra Thompson, and Sophia Carlton of Accenture Federal Services for an interview regarding SNAP recipient fraud trends, emerging recipient fraud prevention, and detection tools and techniques. After this meeting, UCOWF was asked to complete a questionnaire titled FNS Assessment of SNAP Recipient Fraud Trends, which we are currently working on.

On May 24, 2023, Dawn Royal, Andrew McClenahan, Jana McDonough, and I met via videoconference with several of Senator Boozman's staff. In attendance was Katherine Thomas, Senior Professional Staff, Dr. John Newton, Chief Economist, Karen Fletcher, U.S. Department of Agriculture Legal Detail, and Kate Covington, Legislative Aid, Advisor on Nutrition Policies. During that time, we discussed several pitfalls in SNAP and how to strengthen program integrity, government accountability, and public trust.

UCOWF will be returning to Washington, D.C., where we were invited by Congressman Thompson's Office to testify before the House Agriculture Committee, focusing on the Chairman's four principles related to innovation, employment, integrity, and health, on June 7, 2023. Past UCOWF President, Dawn Royal will be representing UCOWF and will be participating in the integrity discussion regarding fraud, waste, and abuse in SNAP. Andrew McClenahan and I will be accompanying her in Washington, D.C. We will be meeting with other members of Congress to spread UCOWF's message that fraud in SNAP far exceeds the "less than 1%" promoted by FNS and bring to light, the largely unknown fact that USDA spends less than 1/20th of 1% of the SNAP budget on the prevention, detection, and prosecution of fraud.

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Upcoming Events

[50th Annual Conference](#)

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT ENDS
AUGUST 31, 2023

**Virginia Beach, VA September
11-14, 2023**

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE REPORT:

US Farm Bill Hearing

UCOWF has been called to testify in a June 7 hearing with the full House Committee on Agricultural as well as individual Congressmen/Congresswomen staff. UCOWF Intergovernmental members (Andrew McClenahan, Dawn Royal, President Andrew Pettit, and Jana McDonough) met again with Senate Committee on Agriculture staff members on 5/24.

USDA/FNS Recipient Fraud Study

FNS has hired Accenture to complete a study on SNAP recipient fraud. As the premier (and only) national organization representing public assistance fraud administrators, investigators, and recovery specialists, they contacted UCOWF. Andy McClenahan and Dawn Royal met virtually with Accenture and FNS. See the snapshots of their discussion below. Andy and Dawn are also working on a list of follow up questions. This is an on-going dialogue, and we will share the results when published.



In the News

Follow UCOWF on LinkedIn and Facebook where members share news, trends, success stories, and stay connected to legislative news!



New Website

We're excited to announce the launch of the new and improved ucowf.net! We've redesigned the experience to better serve all of our members, to articulate our organizational purpose for anyone looking for information about UCOWF, and to implement our updated brand visuals for a clear and engaging experience. In addition, we've implemented a more robust membership management structure that will streamline your access to everything UCOWF has to offer.

We want to take a couple minutes and explain what changes you can expect to see:

- **New Website:** Our online presence has a new layout, so navigating our website is now easier than ever.
- **Updated Logo and Brand:** We've updated our positioning, messaging and look to bring clarity to how we talk about ourselves and differentiate our organization.
- **Member Login:** Your password-protected member portal will include secure access to member resources, including the membership directory, billing management, job listings, industry issue forum, and insider policy and legislative updates.

CWFI (Certified Welfare Fraud Investigator) Management: We will now have the ability to manage your CWFI certification online with a simplified process for tacking continuing education hours and keeping your cert up to date.



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President's Blog

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As you may know by now, we have launched our new website. We apologize as not all features are completed. Our website is still under construction; however, every day additional features are being updated. We believe this new website will be easier to navigate than our old one and will meet the business and membership needs our other website was lacking.

Our Conference Committee is continuing the planning of our 50th National Training Conference in Virginia Beach, Virginia and have opened registration through our new website: www.ucowf.net.

Sincerely,

Andrew Petitt, President, CWFI,
United Council on Welfare Fraud

The United Council on Welfare Fraud Visits Washington DC



On February 27 and 28, 2023, I led a delegation of UCOWF leaders on our annual trip to Washington, D.C. to meet with US House of Representatives and Senate members and their staffs. The delegation consisted of past president Dawn Royal (WY), Directors Andrew McClenahan (FL) and Jana McDonough (NE), and me.

We met with US Representative Glenn Thompson (PA), [Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture](#), and his Senior Staff Director, Jennifer Tiller; John Altendorf, Legislative Assistant to US Representative Brad Finstad (MN) who serves as the Chairman of subcommittee on [Nutrition, Foreign Agriculture and Horticulture](#); and Katherine Thomas, Senior Professional Staff to US Senator John Boozman (AR), who serves as the Ranking Member of the [Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee](#).

Our meetings revolved around program integrity and its impact on taxpayers and those for whom the programs were created to assist. We focused on providing information to the lawmakers and their staffs on three issues and offering ideas for change.

Our top priority was advocating for **increased state retention rates** for fraud and inadvertent household error recoveries and requiring those retained dollars to be earmarked exclusively for program integrity efforts. Currently, states can retain 35% of collections for fraud recoveries and 20% for household error collections and UCOWF is advocating for a return to the 2001 standard of 50% retention rate for both fraud and household error overpayment recoveries. In advocating for the rate increase and earmark, we presented data from FNS itself that reported in FY 2022, it spent one-twentieth of one percent of the SNAP budget on program integrity. With so little budget dedicated by FNS to prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution, and recovery of improper payments caused by fraud and error, our position to not only increase the retention rate for recoveries but also codifying those dollars to be exclusively used for program integrity received enthusiastic support from those with whom we met.

The second issue we addressed was the **National Accuracy Clearinghouse (NAC)** and FNS continual efforts to delay implementing the protection against duplicate participation in SNAP. We briefed the lawmakers and their staffs on the history of the NAC: the successful pilot program that was launched in 2013/ 2014, the Public Consulting Group (PCG) report written for FNS in 2015 which supported its implementation, the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 in which Congress directed the FNS to implement NAC, and the 2020 Implementing Rule published by FNS in the Code of Federal Regulations to implement it, and now, a new rule from FNS that completely undermines NAC and will delay its implementation until at least 2027.

UCOWF addressed the Interim CFR and the six year delay in a [December 2022 letter to FNS](#). FNS cites data privacy concerns and the potential for misidentification leading to application denials created by NAC as the basis for derailing its implementation and costing American taxpayers billions of dollars in duplicate payments by doing so. UCOWF leaders presented information that dispels the concerns FNS raised to justify delaying the NAC implementation and urged lawmakers to require FNS to implement NAC immediately.



The final issue UCOWF leaders shared with lawmakers involves the **EBT card skimming** and cloning problem that has exploded across the nation and creates a tremendous challenge for states to uncover, investigate, and stop. We stated that we were not aware of any proposals or preventative measures being taken by FNS and stressed the prevention is the best and most cost-effective measure in combatting fraud.

We discussed the various countermeasures being used by businesses to protect their point of sale (POS) terminals from devices used for skimming and countermeasures used by financial institutions nationwide to thwart credit card cloning. The commercial industry moved quickly to stem losses, but the FNS has been exceptionally slow to react to the mounting loss of tax dollars caused by identity thief account takeover, skimming, and cloning. UCOWF believes that the measures adopted by the private sector, if implemented by FNS would stop the incredible and avoidable loss of tax dollars to thieves and scammers. We urged the lawmakers to compel FNS and States to implement countermeasures currently employed by the private sector to block skimming and cloning, thus protecting the taxpayer and the less fortunate citizens among us who the program was created to assist. [Funding is not an issue.](#)



In all, it was an amazing opportunity to meet with impressive people who shape public policy and provide them with a different view of the effectiveness of safety net programs and how they are being administered. We left encouraged that our efforts would help improve program integrity in the future. Stronger program integrity equals better access to those who desperately need this program.

UCOWF would like to encourage you to reach out to your legislative leaders to reinforce our initiative and to follow us on [LinkedIn](#) for updates while our website redesign is underway.

Florida Award Winners

The Florida Department of Financial Services (DFS), Division of Public Assistance Fraud (DPAF) recognized its members for their efforts in identifying, investigating, and preventing fraud, waste, and abuse in state-administered public assistance programs, along with their dedication to serving the citizens of the State of Florida.

2023 INVESTIGATIVE EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR – Emmitt Bach, Financial Crime Investigator

Emmitt Bach has been a UCOWF Member since May 2022. Emmitt began as a Financial Crime Investigator with the Florida Department of Financial Services, Division of Public Assistance Fraud, in October 2021, after graduating from Florida State University with a Bachelor of Science in Criminology and Criminal Justice and a minor in Psychology. Emmitt currently works out of the Tallahassee Field Office.

2023 DIRECTOR'S AWARD –**Paul Mobley, Operations & Management Consultant Manager**

Paul Mobley currently serves as an Operations & Management Consultant Manager for the Florida Department of Financial Services, Division of Public Assistance Fraud. Paul has over 30 years of service with the State of Florida, including over 26 years with the Division of Public Assistance Fraud. While with the Division of Public Assistance Fraud, Paul has held several positions, including: Investigator, Investigation Manager, Chief of Investigations, Chief of Operations, Senior Management Analyst Supervisor, and Operations & Management Consultant Manager in several field offices and Division headquarters. In his current position, Paul serves as the administrator for many data systems Paul earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the Florida State University in Tallahassee. Paul is a member of the United Council on Welfare Fraud, served on the Director's Committee for Information Services and Long-Range Planning, and held the designation as a Certified Welfare Fraud Investigator.

2023 TEAMWORK AWARD –**Mariela Machuca-Rios, Investigation Manager**

Mariela Machuca-Rios graduated in 2010 from the University of Central Florida with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice. Mariela started with the Division of Public Assistance Fraud (DPAF) in 2012 as a Financial Crime Investigator. Mariela is Investigation Manager. Prior to being employed with DPAF, Mariela was employed with the Orange County Sheriff's Office as a 911 Operator/Dispatcher for seven years.

Kristen Rodriguez, Financial Crime Investigator

Kristen Rodriguez graduated from the University of Central Florida with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and with a minor in Intelligence and National Security. Prior to working for the Division of Public Assistance Fraud, Kristen interned with the Office of Inspector General for the Department of Health and Human Services where she assisted in investigations to fight waste, fraud and abuse and to improve the efficiency of Medicare, Medicaid and other Department of Health & Human Services programs. Kristen began working for the Division of Public Assistance Fraud in November of 2019 and is now a Financial Crime Investigator II. Kristen has been a member of UCOWF since 2022.

Tiffany Hodges, Investigation Manager

Tiffany Hodges graduated from the University of North Florida with a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology. While working on her degree, she was employed with ADT Security Services where she performed multiple roles throughout her employment including the dispatch of law enforcement, fire, and EMS services during emergencies. Tiffany interned with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) as a Child Protective Investigator where she investigated allegations of physical, mental, and emotional abuse of children by conducting interviews with suspects, witnesses, and victims of alleged abuse. Tiffany began working for the Division of Public Assistance Fraud in April 2019 as a Financial Crime Investigator In July 2022, Tiffany was promoted to Investigation Manager.

2023 ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR –**Haley Miller, Research and Training Specialist**

Haley Miller graduated from Tallahassee Community College in December of 2014, obtaining her Associate of Arts degree. Haley then attended Flagler College where she earned her degree in Elementary Education and Exceptional student education in April of 2018. She began with the Division of Public Assistance Fraud (DPAF) in May of 2014 as a Crime Intelligence Technician. By December of 2014 her title changed to a Crime Intelligence Analyst (CIA) where she assisted DPAF investigators. As a CIA, she also provided intel on wanted felons to different law enforcement agencies across the state. Haley was promoted to the Office Operations Manager for DPAF, her position changed to a Research and Training Specialist (RTS). As a RTS, Haley is responsible for acting as the administrator for the State Law Enforcement Bureau (SLEB), and many other functions and reporting