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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Arrests follow DHS Office of Inspector General/USDA investigation into Bridge Card fraud**

**LANSING, Mich.** Nov.7, 2013 – The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS), through its Office of Inspector General (OIG), has completed a joint investigation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture OIG into Bridge Card fraud involving an Alpena County convenience store, its owner and numerous public assistance clients.

The retailer, Z's Crossroads Convenience store and truck stop, 1141 U.S. 23-N in Alpena, has been the subject of the investigation by both state and federal OIG units since Jan.1, 2011.

At issue is the ongoing sale of synthetic drugs and other ineligible items to DHS clients using their Bridge Card food assistance benefits.

Investigators discovered that Z's Crossroads was allowing food assistance clients to purchase synthetic drugs with their Bridge Card. Drugs "Spice" and "Bath Salts" were sold to clients in addition to tobacco products, dog food, toiletries, etc.

Z's Crossroads owner (Lindle Investments LLC) and employee Phil Lindle now face charges through the Alpena County prosecutor's office, including conspiracy to commit food stamp fraud and common law fraud.

"As a good steward for the taxpayers, we will never stand by and allow illegal transactions like this to continue," said Maura Corrigan, DHS Director. "I applaud the collaboration of this joint investigation and pledge that our OIG division will continue its vigorous pursuit of those who would commit fraud with public dollars."

Nine current or former DHS clients now stand charged with food stamp fraud and/or welfare fraud as a result of the investigation.

23 other individuals who voluntarily consented have now been disqualified from the Food Assistance Program as a result of their activity with the retailer during the investigation. Warrants were not sought for these recipients.

Further benefits closures are currently being pursued for other food assistance recipients who frequented the store and took part in illegal transactions between Jan. 1, 2011, and Jan. 31, 2013.

The OIG division, created in 1972, is a criminal justice agency headquartered within the Michigan Department of Human Services.

The OIG assists DHS in maintaining integrity and accountability in the administration of its many assistance programs. OIG agents and their supervisor are strategically located throughout the state of Michigan and provide investigation and advisory services to ensure appropriate and efficient use of available public resources.

The OIG is responsible for investigating instances of alleged welfare fraud in all programs administered by the Department, as well as reviewing administrative policies and procedures and recommending ways of improving accountability, fraud deterrence and detection.

During the 2012 fiscal year, OIG completed 8,855 recipient fraud investigations, resulting in the identification of \$22.6 million of recipient fraud.

For more information on the Department of Human Services and its OIG division, please visit [www.michigan.gov/dhs](http://www.michigan.gov/dhs)

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