

Minnesota repeatedly reported inaccurate data on SNAP to the federal government

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Minnesota reported inaccurate SNAP data to feds



The Minnesota Department of Human Services repeatedly reported incorrect information about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to the federal government, 5 INVESTIGATES has uncovered.

The state's Department of Children, Youth and Families — which took over administration of SNAP in 2024 — then continued to rely on that flawed data to answer questions about one of the state's largest public assistance programs.

Information on how much money Minnesota distributed to SNAP recipients and how many people were found to have defrauded the system is not accurate in three different reports compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a DCYF spokesperson confirmed to 5 INVESTIGATES.

Earlier this month, the state agency said it has discussed a plan to resubmit the information to the USDA.



But the revelations raise questions about the validity of key data points the state is sending to the federal government on a safety net program that serves more than 440,000 Minnesotans and distributes nearly \$70 million each month.

A 174% increase

The data in question is published in the USDA's [State Activity Report](#). The document lists information on all aspects of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program by pulling in dozens of data points reported by all 50 states.





The State Activity Report from fiscal year 2021 showed SNAP issuance in Minnesota jumped 173.96% from 2020 to 2021.



A screenshot of the table showing the spike was posted to social media by state Representative Pam Altendorf (R-Red Wing) in early November. The post prompted speculation about potential fraud in the program.


Pam Altendorf  
@PamAltendorf · [Follow](#)


!? WHY is Minnesota refusing to give Federal Gov't our SNAP records...!?

I think I found what the [@MinnesotaDFL](#) is hiding.


 LOOK    at this chart showing MN with a 174% SNAP issuance increase from 2020 to 2021.



✗ NO other state even coming close!  

Secretary Brooke Rollins  @SecRollins

On my first day @USDA, we told every state to send us their SNAP data so we could make sure illegal immigrants aren't getting benefits meant for American families. 29 states stepped up. 21 blue states refused – and two SUEDE US FOR ASKING! 

And guess what? In just the states

7:30 AM · Nov 3, 2025 

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Four days after the post, DCYF issued a statement that the state “mistakenly included Pandemic EBT” in its form submitted to the federal government and that those funds were “included on two lines of the report in a way that double counted these expenditures.”

Julie Blaha, who serves as Minnesota’s State Auditor, said the SNAP issuance reporting error isn’t surprising.

"When you have a brand new program and you have some very, very technical, very precise ways of categorizing the data, that's not a surprise to have something miscategorized," she said.

However, Blaha also said the agency needs to correct the errors.

"We're going to check it," she said. "We're going to fix it because there are people who depend on that data to make decisions."

DCYF Commissioner Tikki Brown further characterized the mistake as a "mathematical error" in an interview with 5 INVESTIGATES last month.

"We just learned about that fairly recently, when folks started reaching out to us," she said.

Faulty fraud numbers

During that interview, Commissioner Brown was asked about the prevalence of fraud in SNAP in Minnesota. She said less than 1% of program participants are found to have committed fraud in the program.

When asked to be more specific, the commissioner said the state had 143 intentional program violations, which can lead to an administrative hearing or criminal prosecution. She was unable to identify the time period that number covered or answer other questions about the investigations.

DCYF commissioner responds to question about fraud in SNAP



Four days after the interview, and after multiple attempts to get clarity from DCYF on the information, a spokesperson said the figure came from the 2021 USDA State Activity Report and admitted that the "numbers we shared in the interview ... are inaccurate, like the SNAP issuance data in the report."

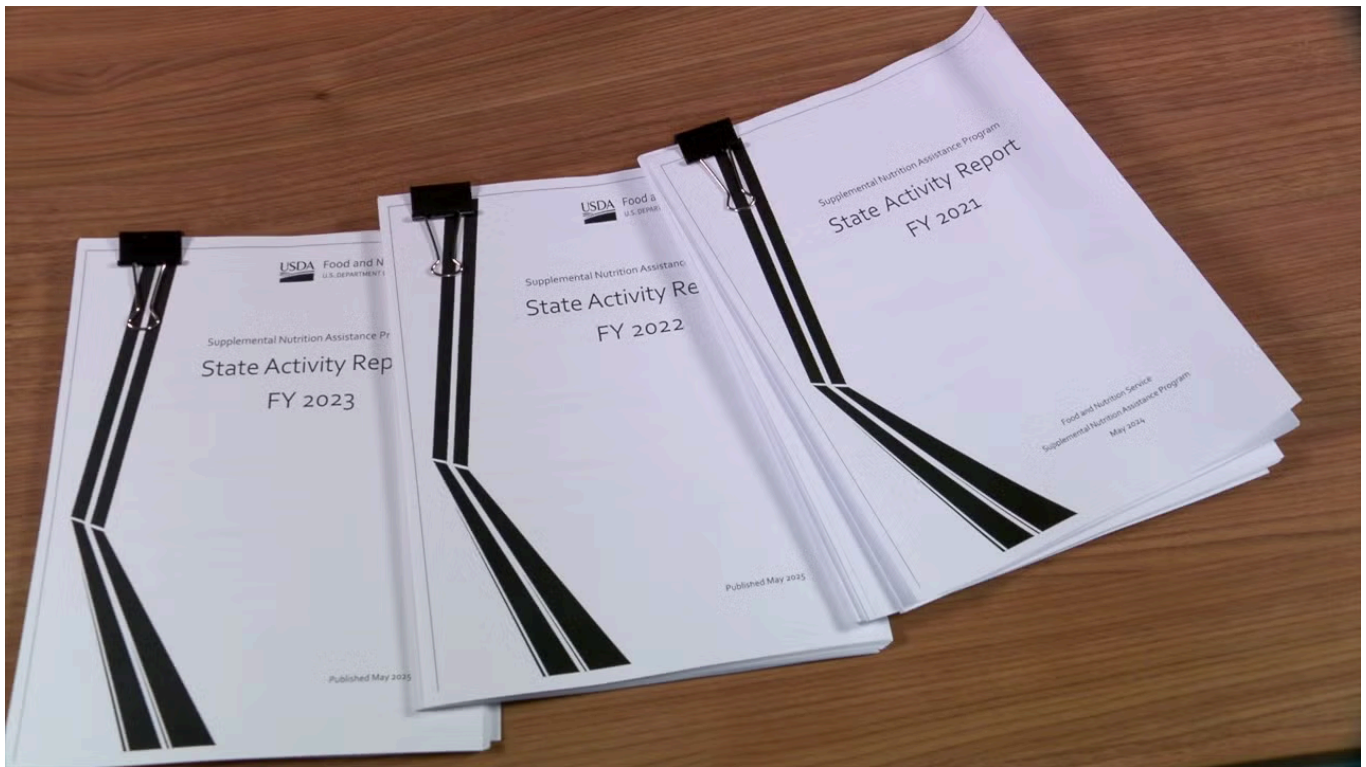
The department later confirmed that the SNAP issuance data and fraud numbers in the last three USDA State Activity Reports were incorrect.

DCYF could not say if any other data submitted to USDA was incorrect, because they "have not reviewed every data point" in the federal reports.

A spokesperson declined follow-up interview requests to speak again with Commissioner Brown. Instead, the department answered questions via email.

DCYF said the inaccurate data did not impact the amount of money Minnesota received from USDA for SNAP issuance.

When asked if the state agency has launched an internal investigation into the cause of the reporting errors, it would only say that it "reviewed the causes of the identified errors and put processes in place to prevent them in the future."



Federal reports from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that contain inaccurate data from Minnesota (KSTP-TV)

The department did not offer specifics and said it did not have a timeline for when the federal reports would be updated.

"DCYF takes our federal reporting responsibilities seriously," it said in response to a question about what the agency will do in the future to ensure accuracy. "We continually review federal guidance and our internal processes to ensure alignment. As a new agency, we are reviewing our processes and structures with fresh eyes to identify areas for improvement."

Reaction from Washington

SNAP programs in Democratic-controlled states like Minnesota have become a target of President Donald Trump's administration.

Earlier this month, the Secretary of Agriculture said the federal government [would withhold money for administering SNAP payments](#) if states continued to refuse to provide data the department requested, such as the names and immigration status of recipients.

Congressman Brad Finstad (R), who represents Minnesota's 1st Congressional District, said the new revelations about the inaccurate data further erode the credibility of Minnesota's state government.

"You guys can't even get your numbers right," the Republican said during an interview with 5 INVESTIGATES. "How do we trust that you're administering these precious taxpayer dollars appropriately to our neighbors in need?"

Finstad sits on the House Committee on Agriculture and chairs the subcommittee that oversees laws and policies that govern food and nutrition assistance programs.

5 INVESTIGATES also asked to interview Representative Angie Craig (D), Minnesota's 2nd Congressional District rep and the ranking member on the House committee. A spokesperson said in an email that "due to the demands on her schedule, she is unable to accommodate this request."

U.S. Rep. Brad Finstad (R-MN) speaking from Washington D.C. (KSTP-TV)

Other issues in SNAP

5 INVESTIGATES has uncovered other issues in SNAP in Minnesota in recent months.

RELATED: [Agency overseeing SNAP in Minnesota has not used new law to pause payments in suspected fraud cases](#)

Audits of federal spending by Minnesota agencies found that, in 2020 and 2023, the Department of Human Services did not perform required security reviews of the computer system that determines SNAP eligibility.

RELATED: [Audits: Lack of security reviews left Minnesota SNAP system vulnerable to breaches, fraud](#)

DHS cited a “lack of staff resources” and “department constraints” as reasons the reviews were not completed.

“In addition to not complying with the state and federal rules, failure to perform regular system security reviews could allow security gaps or vulnerabilities of the system to go undetected, which can increase the risk of a security breach or fraud,” the audit stated.

That reporting prompted the Republican delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives to send [a letter to top state leaders](#), asking the state to answer questions about the security lapses.

[12.9.25-letter-to-gov-walz-snap-integrity](#) [Download](#)

If you have information on SNAP in Minnesota that you want us to investigate, reach out. You can email investigative reporter Kirsten Swanson at kswanson@kstp.com

See this full report Monday night at 6 p.m. on 5 EYEWITNESS NEWS.

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