

Kansas Benefits Card Holders Have New Option

Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) Secretary Phyllis Gilmore is pleased to announce a new measure that will help cash, food and child care assistance clients when they discover their Kansas Benefits Card is lost or stolen. Currently, when a client's card is missing, the card must be permanently deactivated and he/she has to wait for a replacement card to arrive in the mail. **Beginning April 4**, the client can simply suspend the card (temporarily deactivate it), while the individual searches for the card. If the card is found, the client can call the EBT Customer Service Center and unsuspend the card.

"We're excited about this new feature available to our clients," Secretary Gilmore said. "This option is expected to result in fewer card replacements, better card security and improved benefit access."

During the current Administration, DCF has taken several steps to reduce fraudulent use of benefits cards. In 2013, the Kansas Benefits Card was redesigned with added language about prohibited uses. It also began to be issued through the mail, instead of provided at our DCF service centers.

In 2011, the card replacement rate was more than 3 percent (6,632 replacements). To date, we've experienced a nearly 40 percent reduction in the card replacement rate.

Employment-focused statutes enacted in the Kansas Hope, Opportunity and Prosperity for Everyone (HOPE) Act, that was signed into law on April 16, 2015, are being enhanced this legislative session. This year's additions to the HOPE Act include a provision to monitor excessive benefits card replacements and a provision to refer clients to the agency's fraud investigation unit after the fifth request for a replacement card in a 12-month period. The latest version of the HOPE Act has not yet passed.

DCF's Anti-fraud Unit has investigated 1,421 cases this fiscal year, as of Feb. 29, 2016. The value of judgments obtained is \$1.3 million, with programs savings of \$421,599.