



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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**PRESS RELEASE**

3/24/17

**FORMER HHS EMPLOYEE SENTENCED FOR EMBEZZLEMENT,  
WELFARE FRAUD AND IDENTITY THEFT**

Yesterday in Department 3 of the Tulare County Superior Court, Visalia Division, Judge James Hollman sentenced Carmen Villarreal, age 41, of Oroshi, to 210 days in county jail for financial crimes.

On March 3, 2017, Villarreal pleaded no contest to one count of embezzlement and falsification of accounts by a public officer, one count of multiple acts of welfare fraud, and one count of identity theft. Each count is a felony.

Villarreal is a former employee of the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency where she worked as a Self-Sufficiency Support Assistant. In late 2015, the agency received a complaint from client who had requested her case be discontinued only to later learn the account had remained open and benefits were issued and used in her name. Health and Human Services immediately took steps to notify the Office of the District Attorney and provide support for the investigation.

Investigation revealed that between February and October of 2015, Villarreal collected EBT cards and pin numbers from clients whose accounts were to be closed. Villarreal then kept these accounts open and personally used the benefits on the card.

In addition to her sentence, Villarreal was also placed on three years' probation and ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$1,009.18.

The case was prosecuted by Senior Deputy District Attorney Rodney Blaco of the Financial Crimes Division and investigated by Roselyn Oakes of the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations – Welfare Fraud Division.

*Media inquiries can be directed to the Office of the District Attorney, County of Tulare  
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