Food Stamp Traffickers Arrested in Statewide Sweep - The Department arrested 21 individuals in an intensive operation to combat public assistance fraud. Operation Cash Exchange targeted retailers illegally providing cash from government issued Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, which are authorized only to purchase approved food staples. During the operation, undercover operatives visited convenience stores, small grocery markets and gas stations, using undercover EBT cards to acquire cash and other items ineligible for purchase. Store owners and clerks processed transactions indicating a food staple purchase, but provided a portion of the transaction amount back to the undercover operative in the form of cash and retained a portion for themselves. In most cases, few or no food items were purchased. The U.S. Department of Agriculture administers the federal food stamp program and estimates the 15 stores where arrests were made committed $3.5 million in food stamp fraud last year.

Operation Pain Killer nabs Prescription Drug Traffickers - The Department announced the arrest of 172 individuals and the seizure of more than 20,000 prescription pills during Operation Pain Killer, an aggressive five-month investigation targeting Central Florida prescription drug traffickers. The investigation focused on traffickers in Orange, Lake, Seminole and Osceola counties who sold prescription medications they had illegally obtained by visiting pill mills in Central and South Florida. The majority of the individuals were charged with trafficking in Schedule II narcotics. During the course of the operation, law enforcement agencies seized large quantities of oxycodone, hydrocodone and alprazolam. The arrests included two physicians who operated pain management clinics alleged to have provided painkillers to hundreds of people without medical necessity. The Department coordinated the proactive and focused sweep, partnering with neighboring county drug task forces and multiple other state and federal agencies.

Three Arrested in Drug Diversion Scheme – Commissioner Bailey and Attorney General McCollum announced the arrest of three individuals for their role in a multi-million dollar drug diversion scheme. The three are accused of buying prescription drugs from Medicaid recipients, repacking them and reselling them to out of state wholesalers. An FDLE agent followed two of the suspects as they delivered eight boxes of contraband prescription drugs to Federal Express in Miami. The drugs were valued at more than $500,000 and were not accompanied by required paperwork showing their source. Agents later stopped a semi-trailer loaded with $1 million worth of contraband prescription drugs as it was leaving a warehouse rented by one of the suspects. Searches of the suspects’ residence and two warehouses resulted in the recovery of additional contraband prescription drugs valued at $500,000 as well as suspected forged documents. The three were arrested and charged with trafficking contraband prescription drugs, organized scheme to defraud and conspiracy charges carrying a combined penalty of 90 years in prison.

Mortgage Fraud Surge Nets Over 100 Individuals – The Department participated in a nine-month mortgage fraud investigation which resulted in charges against over 100 defendants and involved over $400 million in loans and more than 700 properties procured by fraud. The investigation was launched in response to the epidemic of mortgage fraud throughout Florida which began during the state’s real estate boom earlier this decade and contributes to the current economic situation nationwide. Hundreds of mortgage fraud leads were investigated by state and federal law enforcement agencies and extensive investigative and prosecutorial resources were dedicated to this effort in order to bring perpetrators to justice quickly and provide maximum deterrence. The defendants are being prosecuted by the US Attorney’s Office for the Middle District of Florida.
FDLE Breaks Up Central Florida Fraud Ring - The Department arrested 21 individuals for their involvement in an elaborate fraud and identity theft ring operating across Central Florida totaling over $200,000 in losses. Investigators allege the ring leader provided accomplices money to open accounts at a local credit union. The accomplices shared their account Automated Teller Machine (ATM) cards and corresponding pin numbers with the ring leader who paid them a nominal fee and then deposited fraudulent checks, via the ATM, into the recently opened accounts and immediately made a withdrawal. Once the deposited checks failed to clear, a credit union representative would call the account holder, who would then claim his/her ATM card was stolen. The Attorney General’s Office of Statewide Prosecution is prosecuting the case.

Miami Man Charged in $55 million Medicare Fraud Scheme - The Department arrested a Miami resident, in partnership with federal law enforcement, as part of a fraud scheme for allegedly submitting $55 million in false claims to Medicare through seven medical clinics throughout Florida. The clinics were purported to provide expensive medical treatments for Medicare beneficiaries suffering from ailments including cancer, HIV, AIDS and chronic pain. Based on the fraudulent claims, it is estimated that Medicare paid the individual and his conspirators $22 million, which he then used to purchase numerous exotic cars, jewelry and horses.

FDLE Arrests Man Wanted for Central Florida Multi-Million Dollar Investment Fraud - The Department arrested a man wanted for his role in a large-scale investment fraud scheme that targeted investors from Central Florida and the United Kingdom. Investigators allege the individual solicited investors to make down payments on vacation homes to be built at a proposed housing development in Osceola County. Several hundred investors paid an estimated $15 million for the construction of the vacation homes. To date, no homes have been built. Investigators allege the individual used the initial investments to finance the purchase of the property so that construction could begin, then kept the remainder of the $15 million for personal use, spending it on luxury cars, interior decorating, and a condo, as part of his lavish lifestyle in the Miami area.