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PRESS RELEASE

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CHUALAR COUPLE PLEADS GUILTY TO WELFARE FRAUD

People v. Ana Villegas: 18CR009969, and Juan Garcia-Aspeitia: 18CR009970

SALINAS, California- Monterey County District Attorney Jeannine M. Pacioni announced today that Ana Villegas, age 31, and Juan Garcia-Aspeitia, age 41, both residents of Chualar, pled guilty to felony welfare fraud. The plea was taken by Monterey County Superior Court Judge Mark E. Hood.

Between the months of April 2015 and October 2017, the couple was receiving CalFresh benefits (food stamps) and CalWorks benefits (cash aide) claiming that they needed these benefits to support their children as they were both unemployed. A subsequent investigation by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Monterey County District Attorney's Office revealed that both individuals were in fact employed during the entire fraud period. Both Villegas and Garcia-Aspeitia misrepresented their employment and income status to DSS, as well as on the requisite reporting forms for these programs. Their household income was well above the level required to be eligible to receive any benefits. The couple's misrepresentations resulted in an overpayment of benefits of \$21,014.00.

Villegas and Garcia-Aspeitia will be sentenced on October 17, 2019. Both face 3 years of formal felony probation, up to 365 days in jail, and will be ordered to pay back the loss directly to the Department of Social Services.

It is illegal to use benefits belonging to another or benefits obtained using misrepresentations. Monterey County Department of Social Services along with the Monterey County District Attorney's Office has a welfare fraud tip line. If you have information regarding welfare fraud you can leave an anonymous tip at (831)755-3224.

This case was investigated by the Department of Social Services and District Attorney Investigator Kris Hunsaker.