



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

APR 09 2012

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

3101 Park  
Center Drive

Alexandria, VA  
22302-1500

Mr. Dick Costolo  
Chief Executive Officer  
Twitter, Inc.  
795 Folsom St., Suite 600  
San Francisco, California 94107

Dear Mr. Costolo:

The Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, the Federal agency responsible for administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, requests your assistance.

The USDA has determined that the sale or offer to sell SNAP benefits in public or online is an intentional program violation and has issued policy guidance to that effect (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/2011/100411.pdf>). We have received complaints that individuals are using Twitter accounts to post advertisements and make offers to buy or sell SNAP benefits.

SNAP benefits are United States Government obligations that are stored on State-issued Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. In accordance with Section 5 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, 7 U.S.C. § 2014, EBT cards with SNAP benefits are only issued to households that have been certified as eligible to participate in the Program. SNAP benefits may only be used by a SNAP recipient to purchase eligible food, as defined in 7 U.S.C. § 2012(k); any other use of SNAP benefits, including the posting of SNAP benefits for sale on the Internet, violates the Act and its regulations and, as stated above, may be subject to criminal penalties. *See* 7 U.S.C. § 2024(b); 7 CFR 274.7(a).

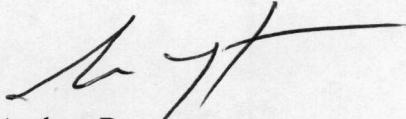
We consulted with our Office of General Counsel and, based on those discussions, are hereby requesting that Twitter post a notice regarding the illegality of buying or selling SNAP benefits on its website and/or that the buying or selling of SNAP benefits be added to your Twitter Rules as a violation of those rules. Also, we ask for your assistance in monitoring activity on Twitter to identify and remove posts from individuals attempting to engage in buying or selling SNAP benefits, more commonly referred to by users of your service as "Food Stamps" or "EBT". In addition, while we realize that Twitter maintains a data use policy to protect the privacy of its users, we ask that if you have public information of the buyers and sellers' names, addresses and/or phone numbers, to please send the information to USDA and we will forward it to our Office of Inspector General for investigation.

The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Mr. Dick Costolo  
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We appreciate your cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions or information to share, please contact Ronald Ward by phone at 703-305-2523 or email at [Ronald.Ward@fns.usda.gov](mailto:Ronald.Ward@fns.usda.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Rowe', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Audrey Rowe  
Administrator  
Food and Nutrition Service