

PRESS RELEASE

Hartford Man Sentenced to 57 Months in Prison for Fraudulently Collecting Social Security, Unemployment, and Food Stamp Benefits

Monday, March 9, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Connecticut

David X. Sullivan, United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced that RICARDO SANTIAGO, 60, of Hartford, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Vernon D. Oliver in Hartford to 57 months of imprisonment and three years of supervised release for fraudulently obtaining Social Security, unemployment, and Food Stamp benefits.

According to court documents and statements made in court, between 2002 and 2024, Santiago held jobs with more than 20 employers and earned income totaling more than \$580,000. Santiago concealed his income from federal and state government agencies by providing to employers false identification, including a Social Security number and card belonging to another individual, and, in at least one instance, a false Social Security card.

In 2002, Santiago applied for Retirement Survivors Disability Insurance (RSDI) benefits, representing to the Social Security Administration that he was unable to work due to disability. As a result, he began receiving RSDI payments in September 2002. In 2017, Santiago completed paperwork to maintain his benefits in which he asserted that he remained disabled and had not worked for the past two years. Santiago ultimately collected more than \$316,000 in RSDI payments to which he was not entitled.

In February 2017, Santiago submitted to the Connecticut Department of Social Services (CT-DSS) an application for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits ("Food Stamps"), representing to the CT-DSS and the U.S. Department of Agriculture that he earned no income from employment. He began receiving SNAP benefits in March 2017 and subsequently completed forms to renew his SNAP benefits on which he

again represented that he had no change in his income and that he earned no money from employment. Santiago made more than \$18,000 in purchases with SNAP benefits to which he was not entitled.

In April 2020, Santiago applied to the Connecticut Department of Labor (CT-DOL) for Unemployment Insurance benefits. On the application, Santiago used a Social Security number belonging to another individual, and he represented to the CT-DOL and U.S. Department of Labor that he was unemployed but available for work and physically able to work. He subsequently completed weekly certifications making the same representations. From April 2020 through February 2021, Santiago received more than \$36,000 in payments to which he was not entitled.

Judge Oliver ordered Santiago to pay \$371,686 in restitution.

Santiago was arrested on May 7, 2024. On February 24, 2025, he pleaded guilty to wire fraud.

In September 2025, while released on bond and awaiting sentencing, Santiago staged his and his daughter's drowning in the Connecticut River and attempted to flee. Hartford Police located Santiago and his daughter in Hartford on September 20, 2025. Santiago has been detained since that date.

This matter was investigated by the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Inspector General, the U.S. Department of Labor Office of the Inspector General, and the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of the Inspector General. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathan J. Guevremont.

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