

STATE OF MICHIGAN
STATE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS AND RULES

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF: [REDACTED]

Claimant

Reg. No: 2009-20387

Issue No: 1038

Case No: [REDACTED]

Load No: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date:

June 4, 2009

Wayne County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Suzanne L. Keegstra

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on June 4, 2009. The claimant personally appeared and provided testimony.

ISSUE

Did the department properly determine the claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case should be closed for Work First/Jobs, Education and Training (WF/JET) program noncompliance in April, 2009?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the competent, material and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

1. The claimant was determined to be a mandatory WF/JET program participant, required to participate for 40 hours per week.

2. The claimant was mailed a Work First/Jobs, Education and Training Appointment Notice (DHS-4785) on February 13, 2009. The claimant was instructed to attend the WF/JET program beginning February 23, 2009 (Department Exhibit B).

3. Also enclosed with the WF/JET Appointment Notice, was a Verification Checklist (DHS-3503) that requested a completed Medical Needs form (DHS-54A). The comments section indicates “you must verify that your son is totally disabled so that you are not able to do the JET program.” The completed Medical Needs form was also due by February 23, 2009 (Department Exhibit A).

4. The claimant did not turn in any completed medical documentation forms establishing his son’s disability. The claimant did begin attending WF/JET on February 23, 2009.

5. The claimant left WF/JET early on March 13, 2009, stating he had a doctor’s appointment. Although the department requested documentation regarding the appointment, no documentation was provided by the claimant (Department Exhibit H).

6. The claimant did not attend WF/JET and did not call to explain an absence on March 16, 2009. The claimant did submit a doctor’s slip during the hearing, from the Children’s Center that indicates he came for an appointment with his son on that day (Department Exhibit H, Claimant Exhibit L).

7. On March 17, 2009, the claimant did not show up to WF/JET until 11:00 am and provided no documentation to the department regarding the absence (Department Exhibit H).

8. The claimant stopped participating with WF/JET on March 17, 2009. The claimant provides no documentation excusing any absences from March 17, 2009 on. Due to this WF/JET requested a triage on April 2, 2009 (Department Exhibit H).

9. A Notice of Noncompliance (DHS-2444) was mailed to the claimant on April 9, 2009, scheduling a triage appointment for April 17, 2009 (Department Exhibit C).

10. The claimant did attend the triage appointment. No good cause was granted for the noncompliance (Department Exhibit E).

11. The claimant requested a hearing on April 17, 2009. The department deleted the negative action because the claimant's hearing request was submitted prior to the negative action.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Family Independence Program (FIP) was established pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Public Law 104-193, 8 USC 601, *et seq.* The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the FIP program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MAC R 400.3101-3131. The FIP program replaced the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program effective October 1, 1996. Department policies are found in the Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

Department policy states:

DEPARTMENT PHILOSOPHY

FIP

DHS requires clients to participate in employment and self-sufficiency-related activities and to accept employment when offered. Our focus is to assist clients in removing barriers so they can participate in activities which lead to self-sufficiency. However, there are consequences for a client who refuses to participate, without good cause.

The goal of the FIP penalty policy is to obtain client compliance with appropriate work and/or self-sufficiency-related assignments and to ensure that barriers to such compliance have been identified and removed. The goal is to bring the client into compliance.

Noncompliance may be an indicator of possible disabilities. Consider further exploration of any barriers.

DEPARTMENT POLICY

FIP

A Work Eligible Individual (WEI), see PEM 228, who fails, without good cause, to participate in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, must be penalized.

See PEM 233B for the Food Assistance Program (FAP) policy when the FIP penalty is closure. For the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) penalty policy, see PEM 233C. PEM 233A, p. 1.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH EMPLOYMENT AND/OR SELF-SUFFICIENCY-RELATED ACTIVITIES

As a condition of eligibility, all WEIs and non-WEIs must work or engage in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities. Noncompliance of applicants, recipients, or member adds means doing any of the following without good cause:

- . Failing or refusing to:
 - .. Appear and participate with the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Program or other employment service provider.
 - .. Complete a Family Automated Screening Tool (FAST), as assigned as the first step in the FSSP process.
 - .. Develop a Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP) or a Personal Responsibility Plan and Family Contract (PRPFC).
 - .. Comply with activities assigned to on the Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP) or PRPFC.
 - .. Appear for a scheduled appointment or meeting.
 - .. Participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities.
 - .. Accept a job referral.

- .. Complete a job application.
- .. Appear for a job interview (see the exception below).
- . Stating orally or in writing a definite intent not to comply with program requirements.
- . Threatening, physically abusing or otherwise behaving disruptively toward anyone conducting or participating in an employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activity.
- . Refusing employment support services if the refusal prevents participation in an employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activity. PEM 233A, pp. 1-2.

GOOD CAUSE FOR NONCOMPLIANCE

Good cause is a valid reason for noncompliance with employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities that are based on factors that are beyond the control of the noncompliant person. A claim of good cause must be verified and documented for member adds and recipients. Document the good cause determination on the DHS-71, Good Cause Determination and the FSSP under the “Participation and Compliance” tab.

See “School Attendance” PEM 201 for good cause when minor parents do not attend school.

Employed 40 Hours

Client Unit

Good cause includes the following:

- . The person is working at least 40 hours per week on average and earning at least state minimum wage.
- . The client is physically or mentally unfit for the job or activity, as shown by medical evidence or other reliable information. This includes any disability-related limitations that preclude participation in a work and/or self-sufficiency-related activity. The disability-related needs or limitations may not have been identified or assessed prior to the noncompliance.

Illness or Injury

The client has a debilitating illness or injury, or an immediate family member's illness or injury requires in-home care by the client.

Reasonable Accommodation

The DHS, employment services provider, contractor, agency, or employer failed to make reasonable accommodations for the client's disability or the client's needs related to the disability. PEM 233A, pp. 3-4.

No Child Care

The client requested Child Day Care Services (CDC) from DHS, the MWA, or other employment services provider prior to case closure for noncompliance and CDC is needed for a CDC-eligible child, but none is appropriate, suitable, affordable and within reasonable distance of the client's home or work site.

- . **Appropriate.** The care is appropriate to the child's age, disabilities and other conditions.
- . **Reasonable distance.** The total commuting time to and from work and child care facilities does not exceed three hours per day.
- . **Suitable provider.** The provider meets applicable state and local standards. Also, providers (e.g., relatives) who are NOT registered/licensed by the DHS Office of Child and Adult Services must meet DHS enrollment requirements for day care aides or relative care providers. See PEM 704.
- . **Affordable.** The child care is provided at the rate of payment or reimbursement offered by DHS.

No Transportation

The client requested transportation services from DHS, the MWA, or other employment services provider prior to case closure and reasonably priced transportation is not available to the client.

Illegal Activities

The employment involves illegal activities.

Discrimination

The client experiences discrimination on the basis of age, race, disability, gender, color, national origin, religious beliefs, etc. PEM 233A, p. 4.

Unplanned Event or Factor

Credible information indicates an unplanned event or factor which likely prevents or significantly interferes with employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities. Unplanned events or factors include, but are not limited to the following:

- . Domestic violence.
- . Health or safety risk.
- . Religion.
- . Homelessness.
- . Jail.
- . Hospitalization.

Comparable Work

The client quits to assume employment comparable in salary and hours. The new hiring must occur before the quit.

Long Commute

Total commuting time exceeds:

- . Two hours per day, NOT including time to and from child care facilities, **or**
- . Three hours per day, including time to and from child care facilities. PEM 233A, pp.4-5.

NONCOMPLIANCE PENALTIES FOR ACTIVE FIP CASES AND MEMBER ADDS

The penalty for noncompliance without good cause is FIP closure. Effective April 1, 2007, the following minimum penalties apply:

- . For the first occurrence on the FIP case, close the FIP for 3 calendar months unless the client is excused from the noncompliance as noted in “First Case Noncompliance Without Loss of Benefits” below.

- . For the second occurrence on the FIP case, close the FIP for 3 calendar months.
- . For the third and subsequent occurrence on the FIP case, close the FIP for 12 calendar months.
- . The penalty counter also begins April 1, 2007 regardless of the previous number of noncompliance penalties.

TRIAGE

JET participants will not be terminated from a JET program without first scheduling a “triage” meeting with the client to jointly discuss noncompliance and good cause. Locally coordinate a process to notify the MWA case manager of triage meetings including scheduling guidelines.

Clients can either attend a meeting or participate in a conference call if attendance at the triage meeting is not possible. If a client calls to reschedule an already scheduled triage meeting, offer a phone conference at that time. Clients must comply with triage requirement within the negative action period.

When a phone triage is conducted for a first noncompliance and the client agrees to comply, complete the DHS-754, First Noncompliance Letter, as you would complete in a triage meeting. Note in the client signature box “Client Agreed by Phone”. Immediately send a copy of the DHS-754 to the client and phone the JET case manager if the compliance activity is to attend JET.

Determine good cause based on the best information available during the triage and prior to the negative action date. Good cause may be verified by information already on file with DHS or MWA.

If the FIS, JET case manager, or MRS counselor do not agree as to whether “good cause” exists for a noncompliance, the case must be forwarded to the immediate supervisors of each party involved to reach an agreement.

DHS must be involved with all triage appointment/phone calls due to program requirements, documentation and tracking.

Note: Clients not participating with JET must be scheduled for a “triage” meeting between the FIS and the client. This does not include applicants. PEM 233A, p. 7.

Good Cause Established

If the client establishes good cause within the negative action period, do **NOT** impose a penalty. See “Good Cause for Noncompliance” earlier in this item. Send the client back to JET, if applicable, after resolving transportation, CDC, or other factors which may have contributed to the good cause. Do not enter a new referral on ASSIST. Enter the good cause reason on the DHS-71 and on the FSSP under the “Participation and Compliance” tab.

Good Cause NOT Established

If the client does NOT provide a good cause reason within the negative action period, determine good cause based on the best information available. If no good cause exists, allow the case to close. If good cause is determined to exist, delete the negative action. PEM 233A, pp. 10-11.

Noncompliance is defined by department policy as failing or refusing to do a number of activities, such as attending and participating with WF/JET, completing the FAST survey, completing job applications, participating in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, etc. PEM 233A.

In this case, the claimant admits that he was noncompliant with the WF/JET program requirements. He admits that he had numerous absences and did not get in his required 40 hours each week.

However, the claimant indicates that he had good cause for his noncompliance because he has a son that has a disability. Good cause is defined in policy as a valid reason for noncompliance with employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities that are based on factors that are beyond the control of the noncompliant person. PEM 233A. The claimant testified that his son is 14 years-old and does attend school. The claimant further testified that he has many meetings with the school due to his son’s behavioral problems. The claimant also indicated that he and his son go to counseling. The claimant did provide a letter from the

██████████ dated April 22, 2009, that indicates he and his son come to the ██████████

██████ for counseling, medication management and testing. However, this letter does not list days or times or even how often the therapy sessions are. The claimant provided three doctor's excuses at the hearing. However, they are only for the dates of December 2, 2008, March 2, 2009 and March 16, 2009.

The claimant does work approximately 15 hours per week, taking care of his mother with dementia. However, these work hours were counted toward his WF/JET participation.

In this case, it would seem that the claimant could have attended WF/JET before or after his counseling appointments or school appointments to get his required hours in. It is highly unlikely that a medical appointment or therapy session would be scheduled for a full day. The claimant should have had time to attend either before or after any of these appointments.

The claimant admitted that his son does attend regular school. Thus, the claimant should have hours available to attend WF/JET when his son is attending school. It is noted that the claimant manages to work approximately 15 hours per week, even with any issues with his son.

Further, if the claimant's son is disabled to the extent that the claimant can not participate in WF/JET, the claimant could have turned in a completed Medical Needs form to provide documentation to the department for a medical deferral from WF/JET. The claimant admitted that he did receive the Medical Needs form from the department. The claimant testified that he thought wasn't sure if any of his son's doctors had completed the form. To be eligible for a medical deferral, the claimant had to ensure that the Medical Needs form was completed and returned to the department. The department could not make the decision to defer him without this information.

Therefore, this Administrative Law Judge does find that the claimant was not compliant with his WF/JET program requirements. He did not provide evidence showing all his absences were due to any good cause reasons.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department properly determined the claimant was noncompliant with WF/JET program requirements and properly determined his FIP case should be terminated.

Accordingly, the department's actions are UPHELD. SO ORDERED.

/s/

Suzanne L. Keegstra
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: June 23, 2009

Date Mailed: June 25, 2009

NOTICE: Administrative Hearings may order a rehearing or reconsideration on either its own motion or at the request of a party within 30 days of the mailing date of this Decision and Order. Administrative Hearings will not order a rehearing or reconsideration on the Department's motion where the final decision cannot be implemented within 90 days of the filing of the original request.

The Claimant may appeal the Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the mailing of the Decision and Order or, if a timely request for rehearing was made, within 30 days of the receipt date of the rehearing decision.

SLK 

cc: 