

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: 2009-34113

Issue No: 1038

Case No:

Load No:

Hearing Date:

October 1, 2009

Kalamazoo County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Steven M. Brown

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 conducted from [REDACTED] on October 1, 2009.

ISSUE

Whether the Department properly terminated Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

(1) Claimant was a recipient of FIP benefits and a mandatory Work First/Jobs, Employment and Training (WF/JET) participant.

(2) On June 22, 2009, the Department was informed by WF/JET that Claimant was in noncompliance with WF/JET requirements. (Exhibit 4)

(3) On July 10, 2009, a triage meeting was held. Claimant explained to the Department that she actually applied for various positions at a motel – [REDACTED] – including positions at the nightclub above it – [REDACTED]. At the time she was completing her June 15, 2009 job leads sheets, she could not remember the name of the motel so she listed [REDACTED] closed on May 30, 2009. The Department considered this to be a falsification of job leads sheets and found no good cause at the triage. (Exhibits 1, 2)

(4) According to Claimant's Case Manager, [REDACTED], and Claimant, Claimant only has 1 prior noncompliance and not 2 as indicated on a Bridges screen and in the Update/View Case Notes. (Exhibits 3, 4-6)

(5) On August 19, 2009, the Department received Claimant's hearing request.

(6) Claimant recently moved to [REDACTED] from [REDACTED]. The events that led to the termination of Claimant's FIP benefits occurred in [REDACTED] appeared at the hearing, but had no knowledge of the investigation that led to the triage, the triage, the policy involved, etc. At the request of the undersigned, the Department forwarded several documents in this regard after the hearing including JET/Work First Requirements, Claimant's June 15, 2009 Daily Job Leads List and Update/View Case Notes. (Exhibits 7, 8-10, 13-17)

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 Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Bridges Reference Manual (BRM).

Department policy states that clients must be made aware that public assistance is limited to 48 months to meet their family's needs and that they must take personal responsibility to achieve self-sufficiency. This message, along with information on ways to achieve independence, direct support services, non-compliance penalties, and good cause reasons, is initially shared by DHS when the client applies for cash assistance. Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program requirements, education and training opportunities, and assessments will be covered by the JET case manager when a mandatory JET participant is referred at application. BEM 229, p. 1.

Federal and State laws require each work eligible individual (WEI) in the FIP and RAP group to participate in the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Program or other employment-related activities unless temporarily deferred or engaged in activities that meet participation requirements. These clients must participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities to increase their employability and obtain stable employment. JET is a program administered by the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) through the [REDACTED]. The JET program serves employers and job seekers for employers to have skilled workers and job seekers to obtain jobs that provide economic self-sufficiency. A WEI who refuses, without good cause, to participate in assigned employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities is subject to penalties. BEM 230A, p. 1.

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).
 - .. Provide legitimate documentation of work participation.
 - .. Appear for a scheduled appointment or meeting related to assigned activities.
 - .. 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. BEM 233A, pp. 1-2.

The Department is required to send a DHS-2444, Notice of Employment and/or Self-Sufficiency Related Noncompliance within three days after learning of the noncompliance which must include the date of noncompliance, the reason the client was determined to be noncompliant, the penalty that will be imposed and the triage date within the negative action period. BEM 233A, p. 7-8

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. If it is determined at triage that the client has good cause, and good cause issues have been resolved, the client should be sent back to JET.

BEM 233A, p. 3-4

Good cause should be determined 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 [REDACTED]. Good cause must be considered even if the client does not attend, with particular attention to possible disabilities (including disabilities that have not been diagnosed or identified by the client) and unmet needs for accommodation. BEM 233A, p. 7

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 not less than 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 not less than 3 calendar months.
- . For the third and subsequent occurrence on the FIP case, close the FIP for not less than 12 calendar months.
- . The penalty counter also begins April 1, 2007 regardless of the previous number of noncompliance penalties. BEM, p.6

In the instant case, Claimant testified that she applied for a variety of jobs at a motel and could not remember the motel's name so she wrote down the nightclub above it. Claimant testified that she believed the nightclub was part of the motel and did not know that the nightclub was closed. The Department's position is that Claimant's actions constituted falsification of job leads sheets and, therefore, non-compliance with WF/JET requirements. Claimant's actions certainly would constitute falsification if she did not apply at the motel, but even if she did, she still turned in an incomplete job leads sheet and/or a leads sheet that was not filled out correctly in violation of the JET/Work First Requirements. As such, she did not provide legitimate documentation of work participation.

With the above said, I find that the Department acted in accordance with policy in terminating Claimant's FIP benefits. The Hearing Summary and other Department documents offered at and after hearing refer to a 3rd triage/noncompliance and a 12 month penalty. However, the Department and Claimant both stated at hearing that Claimant only has 1 prior noncompliance and, therefore, the appropriate sanction would be 3 months

instead of 12. Given the conflicting documentation and/or testimony and the transfer from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED], I will leave it to the Department to determine the appropriate sanction and afford Claimant the right to request a hearing if she would like to contest the Department's determination as to the length of the sanction.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds that the Department acted in accordance with policy in terminating Claimant's FIP benefits.

Accordingly, the Department's FIP eligibility determination is AFFIRMED, it is SO ORDERED.

/S/

Steven M. Brown
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: October 8, 2009

Date Mailed: October 8, 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 receipt 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.

2009-34113/smb

SMB/db

cc:

