

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: 2009-34573  
Issue No: 3002  
Case No: [REDACTED]  
Load No: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date:  
October 6, 2009  
Kent 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 October 6, 2009. The claimant personally appeared and provided testimony.

ISSUE

Did the department properly budget the claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits beginning in September, 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 a FAP recipient when the department budgeted her case to begin September, 2009. The claimant had \$595.00 in SSI income (\$581 plus the \$14 State Supplement) and \$134.00 in earned income. (Department Exhibit 1 – 2, 6 – 8, 10).

2. The claimant was given a rent expense of \$300.00, which includes utilities and a telephone expense of \$33.00. (Department Exhibit 4).

3. Once these amounts were budgeted, the claimant was eligible for a monthly benefit of \$44.00. (Department Exhibit 1).

4. The claimant submitted a hearing request on August 11, 2009.

### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Food Assistance Program (FAP) (formerly known as the Food Stamp (FS) program) is established by the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, and is implemented by the federal regulations contained in Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the FAP program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MAC R 400.3001-3015. Department policies are found in the Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

Department policy states:

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI)**

##### **All Programs**

Michigan SSI benefits include a basic federal benefit and an additional amount paid with state funds. The amount paid by the state and the payment process varies by living arrangement. See PEM 660. For SSI recipients in independent living or household of another, refer to "Current SSA-Issued SSI", "Retroactive SSA-Issued SSI" and "State SSI Payments" below. For SSI recipients in other living arrangements, refer to just "Current SSA-Issued SSI" and "Retroactive SSA-Issued SSI". PEM, Item 500, p. 31.

##### **Current SSA-Issued SSI**

##### **FIP, MA and TMAP**

Exclude the amount of current SSA-issued SSI as income.

### **SDA, CDC, AMP and FAP Only**

Count the gross amount of current SSA-issued SSI as unearned income. Include SSI withheld to recoup overpayments due to an IPV as defined below.

**IPV** means there was a finding of fraud or an agreement to repay in lieu of prosecution. Court recouped SSI only if IPV information is volunteered by the SSI recipient or other reliable source. You need NOT initiate any contacts.

**Exception:** The Social Security Administration authorizes qualified organizations to deduct a fee for acting as a representative payee. Exclude the fee withheld by an authorized organization.

**Note:** Exclude SSI income received by an AMP client's spouse. PEM, Item 500, p. 31.

### **INCOME**

#### **DEPARTMENT POLICY**

##### **All Programs**

The group composition and program budgeting items specify whose income to count. The program budgeting items might also contain program-specific income deductions or disregards.

Income means benefits or payments measured in money. It includes money a person owns even if NOT paid directly such as stock dividends automatically reinvested and income paid to a representative.

Earned income means income received from another person or organization or from self-employment for duties that were performed for remuneration or profit. Unearned income means all income that is NOT earned income. The item specifies whether the income is earned or unearned.

The amount of income counted may be more than the amount a person actually receives, because it is the amount before any deductions including deductions for taxes and garnishments. The amount before any deductions is called the **gross** amount. PEM, Item 500, p. 1.

## **Wages**

### **All Programs**

**Wages** are the pay an employee receives from another person or organization. Wages include salaries, tips, commissions, bonuses, severance pay and flexible benefits plan funds.

Count an employee's regular wages paid during a vacation or illness as earned income.

Count a wage advance as earnings when the employer actually pays it. Do NOT count the money withheld to offset the advance.

Count wages held by the employer at the request of the employee. However, wages held as a general practice by the employer are NOT income until actually paid.

**Exception:** Income received in one month that is intended to cover several months (e.g., contractual income) is considered available in each of the months covered by the income.

Count gross wages except as explained in this item for:

- . "EIC"
- . "Flexible Benefits"
- . "Strikers"
- . "Student's Earnings"

PEM, Item 500, p. 15.

## **PROSPECTIVE BUDGETING/INCOME CHANGE PROCESSING**

### **DEPARTMENT PHILOSOPHY**

A group's benefits for a month are based, in part, on a prospective income determination. A "best estimate" of income expected to be received by the group during a specific month is determined and used in the budget computation.

Get input from the client whenever possible to establish this "best estimate" amount. The client's understanding of how income is estimated reinforces reporting requirements and makes the client

an active partner in the financial determination process. PEM, Item 505, p. 1.

## **DEPARTMENT POLICY**

### **FIP, SDA, CDC and FAP**

A group's financial eligibility and monthly benefit amount are determined using:

- . actual income (income that was already received), and/or
- . prospected income amounts (not received but expected).

Only countable income is included in the determination (see PEM 500).

Each source of income is converted to a standard monthly amount, unless a full month's income will not be received (see Standard Monthly Amount in this item). PEM, Item 505, p. 1.

**Fluctuating income:** Income received on a regular schedule but that varies from check to check, such as a waitress' income whose hours vary each week. PEM, Item 505, p. 1.

## **DETERMINING BUDGETABLE INCOME**

### **FIP, SDA, CDC, FAP**

Determine budgetable income using countable, available income for the benefit month being processed. PEM, Item 505, p. 2.

### **Past Months**

Use actual gross income amounts received for past month benefits, converting to a standard monthly amount, when appropriate. See Standard Monthly Amount in this item.

**Exception:** Prospective income may be used for past month determinations when:

- . income verification was requested and received, and
- . payments were received by the client after verifications were submitted, and
- . there are no known changes in the income being prospected. PEM, Item 505, p. 2.

### **Current and Future Months**

Prospect income using a “best estimate” of income expected to be received during the month (or already received). Seek input from the client to establish an estimate, whenever possible. PEM, Item 505, p. 2.

To prospect income, you will need to know:

- . the type of income and the frequency it is received (e.g., weekly),
- . the day(s) of the week paid,
- . the date(s) paid, and
- . the gross income amount received or expected to be received on each pay date. PEM, Item 505, p. 2.

### **BUDGETING INCOME**

Use the following guidelines to budget income.

#### **Non-Child Support Income**

Using Past Income

Use past income to prospect income for the future unless changes are expected:

- . Use income from the past 30 days if it appears to accurately reflect what is expected to be received in the benefit month.

**Note:** The 30-day period used can begin up to 30 days before the interview date or the date the information was requested.

**Discard** a pay from the past 30 days if it is unusual and does not reflect the normal, expected pay amounts. Document which pay is being discarded and why. For example, the client worked overtime for one week and it is not expected to recur.

- . Use income from the past 60 or 90 days for fluctuating or irregular income, if:

- .. the past 30 days is not a good indicator of future income, and
- ..
- .. the fluctuations of income during the past 60 or 90 days appear to accurately reflect the income that is expected to be received in the benefit month.

**Note:** The 60 or 90-day period used can begin up to 60 or 90 days before the interview date or the date the information was requested. PEM, Item 505, pp. 5-6.

### **Standard Monthly Amount**

#### **Stable and Fluctuating Income**

A standard monthly amount must be determined for each income source used in the budget.

Convert stable and fluctuating income that is received more often than monthly to a standard monthly amount. Use one of the following methods:

- . Multiply weekly income by 4.3.
- . Multiply amounts received every two weeks by 2.15.
- . Add amounts received twice a month.

This conversion takes into account fluctuations due to the number of scheduled pays in a month.

**Exception:** Do not convert income for the month income starts or stops if a full month's income is not expected in that month. Use actual income received or income expected to be received in these months. PEM, Item 505, p. 7.

### **INCOME DEDUCTIONS**

#### **FIP and SDA Only**

Income deductions are available at both the member and the group level. Apply deductions in the order they are presented in this item. PEM, Item 518, p. 4.

#### **Earned Income Disregard**

Deduct \$200 from each person's countable earnings. Then deduct an additional 20% of each person's remaining earnings. The total

disregard cannot exceed countable earnings. Apply this disregard separately to each program group member's earned income. PEM, Item 518, p. 4.

A non-categorically eligible, non-SDV FS group must have income below the gross and net income limits. PEM, Item 550, p. 1.

Use **only** available, countable income to determine eligibility. PEM 500 defines countable income. PEM 505 defines available income and income change processing. This item describes income budgeting policy. PEM, Item 550, p. 1.

**Always** calculate income on a calendar month basis to determine eligibility and benefit amounts. Use income from a month specified in this item for the benefit month being considered.

Budget the entire amount of earned and unearned countable income. Gross countable earned income is reduced by a 20% earned income deduction. Every case is allowed the standard deduction shown in RFT 255. PEM, Item 550, p. 1.

### **Housing Expenses**

Housing expenses include rent, mortgage, a second mortgage, home equity loan, required condo or maintenance fees, lot rental or other payments including interest leading to ownership of the shelter occupied by the FAP group.

The expense must be a continuing one. Payments that exceed the normal monthly obligation are **not** deductible as a shelter expense unless the payment is necessary to prevent eviction or foreclosure, **and** it has **not** been allowed in a previous FAP budget. Additional expenses for optional charges, i.e., carport, pets, etc. are **not** allowed. PEM, Item 554, p. 9.

### **Heat Included in Rent or Fees**

FAP groups whose heat is **included** in their rent or fees are not eligible for the Heat and Utility Standard, **unless**:

- . they are billed for **excess heat** payments from their landlord,  
**OR**
- . they report that they received, applied for or will be applying for a Home Heating Credit warrant in the current fiscal year (October through September) for their current address.

### **Telephone Standard**

A FAP group which has no heat expense but has a responsibility to pay at least the basic fee required to maintain a telephone, must use the Telephone Standard. This includes cell phones. The standard covers **only** the telephone expense.

When determining eligibility for FAP benefits, the household's total income must be evaluated. All earned and unearned income of each household member must be included unless specifically excluded. PEM 500. The FAP program provides a deduction from earned income of 20%. A standard deduction from income of \$135 is allowed. Another deduction from income is provided if monthly shelter costs are in excess of 50% of the household's income after all of the other deductions have been allowed, up to a maximum of \$300 for non-senior/disabled/veteran households. PEM 500 and 554; Program Reference Manual, Table 255; 7 CFR 273.2.

In this case, the Administrative Law Judge has reviewed the FAP budget and finds that the department properly computed the claimant's net income. The federal regulations at 7 CFR 273.10 provide standards for the amount of a household's benefits. The department, in compliance with the federal regulations, has prepared issuance tables which are set forth at Program Reference Manual, Table 260. The issuance table provides that a household with household size and net income of the claimant is eligible for an FAP allotment of \$44.00.

### **DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department properly budgeted the claimant's FAP benefits beginning September, 2009.

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: October 15, 2009

Date Mailed: October 16, 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 60 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.

SLK 

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