

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: 2010-15196

Issue No: 3008

Case No:

Load No:

Hearing Date:

February 16, 2010

Ingham 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 February 16, 2010.

ISSUE

Whether the Department properly terminated Claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits based upon her failure to provide requested verification(s)?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

- (1) Claimant is a FAP recipient.
- (2) On August 10, 2009, Claimant completed and filed an application for benefits and listed [REDACTED] as her employer. Claimant had previously listed Timemakers Cleaning as her employer in an April 2009 application. (Exhibits 1-4)

(3) On September 3, 2009, the Department mailed Claimant a Verification Checklist requesting verification of her loss of employment with a due date of September 14, 2009. The Verification Checklist made no reference to any specific employer. (Exhibits 5-6)

(4) Claimant received the Verification Checklist and contacted the Department to inquire about the request.

(5) On September 30, 2009, Claimant's FAP case closed for failure to return proofs requested by the Department.

(6) On November 21, 2009, the Department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action which informed her that she was approved for FAP benefits for October 21, 2009 – October 31, 2009 in the amount of [REDACTED]/mo. and November 1, 2009 – September 30, 2009 in the amount of [REDACTED]/mo. (Exhibits 9-11)

(7) On November 21, 2009, the Department mailed Claimant a Verification Checklist requesting verification of her loss of employment with a due date of December 1, 2009. The Verification Checklist made no reference to any specific employer. (Exhibits 12-13)

(8) Claimant received the Verification Checklist and contacted the Department to inquire about the request.

(9) On December 18, 2009, the Department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action which informed her that her FAP benefits would be terminated effective December 31, 2009 because – “You failed to verify or allow the Department to verify necessary information.” (Exhibits 14-15)

(10) On December 23, 2009, the Department received Claimant's hearing request protesting the termination of her FAP benefits.

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. Departmental policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), and the Bridges Reference Manual (BRM).

Clients must cooperate with the local office in determining initial and ongoing eligibility. This includes the completion of necessary forms. BAM 105, p. 5 Verification means documentation or other evidence to establish the accuracy of the client's verbal or written statements. BAM 130, p.1 Verification is usually required at application/redetermination and for a reported change affecting eligibility or benefit level when it is required by policy, required as local office option or information regarding an eligibility factor is unclear, inconsistent, incomplete or contradictory. BAM 130, p.1 The Department uses documents, collateral contacts or home calls to verify information. BAM 130, p.1 A collateral contact is a direct contact with a person, organization or agency to verify information from the client. BAM 130, p. 2 When documentation is not available, or clarification is needed, collateral contact may be necessary. BAM 130, p. 2

Clients are allowed 10 calendar days (or other time limit specified in policy) to provide the verifications requested by the Department. BAM 130, p. 4 If the client

cannot provide the verification despite a reasonable effort, the time limit should be extended at least once. BAM 130, p. 4 Verifications are considered timely if received by the date they are due. BAM 130, p. 4 A negative action notice should be sent when the client indicates a refusal to provide the verification or the time period provided has lapsed and the client has not made a reasonable effort to provide it. BAM 130, p. 4 For MA only, the Department should extend the time limit up to three times and the negative action notice should be sent when the client indicates a refusal to provide the verification or the time period given has elapsed. BAM 130, p. 5

Clients are allowed a reasonable opportunity to resolve any discrepancy between statements and information obtained through another source. BAM 130, p. 6 Disagreements and misunderstandings should be resolved at the lowest possible level to avoid unnecessary hearings. BAM 600, p. 11

In the instant case, based on the testimony and documentation offered at and after hearing, I find that Claimant made a reasonable effort to inquire about and/or provide the proofs requested by the Department.

With the above said, I do not find that the Department established that it acted in accordance with policy in terminating Claimant's FAP benefits.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, does not find that the Department acted in accordance with policy in terminating Claimant's FAP benefits.

Accordingly, the Department's FAP eligibility determination is REVERSED, it is SO ORDERED. The Department shall:

- (1) Reinstate Claimant's FAP benefits retroactive to the closure date.
- (2) Issue Claimant supplemental benefits she is entitled to, if any.
- (3) If necessary, send Claimant a Verification Checklist and/or any other documentation requesting proofs regarding her separation from employment with [REDACTED]. Any request shall be detailed and specific as to the proofs requested.
- (4) If necessary, run a new FAP budget.
- (5) Notify Claimant in writing of the Department's revised determination.
- (6) Claimant retains the right to request a hearing if she would like to contest the Department's revised determination.

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

Date Signed: February 25, 2010

Date Mailed: February 26, 2010

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.

2010-15196/smb

SMB/db

cc:

