

STATE OF MICHIGAN
STATE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS AND RULES

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF: [REDACTED]

Claim

ant

Reg. No: 2010-24969

Issue No: 1038, 3029

Case No: [REDACTED]

Load No: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date:

May 13, 2010

Lenawee County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Gary F. Heisler

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 May 13, 2010. Claimant appeared and testified.

ISSUES

Did the Department of Human Services properly sanction Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case for failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities?

Did the Department of Human Services properly sanction Claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) case for failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities?

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 was an ongoing recipient of Family Independence Program (FIP) and Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits. Claimant was assigned to participate in the Michigan Works Agency/Jobs Education and Training Program (JET) for 30 hours per week.

(2) On February 11, 2010, Claimant participated in a triage meeting via telephone and it was determined that she had failed to meet her participation requirements with the Michigan Works Agency/Jobs Education and Training Program (JET). Claimant agreed to a compliance test in lieu of a sanction. A First Non-Compliance Letter (DHS-754) letter was filled out and Claimant was required to participate in job search activities for 30 hours during the compliance period.

(3) On February 16, 2009, when Claimant submitted her job search logs the Michigan Works Agency worker checked them and determined that Claimant had only completed 19.5 hours of countable job search activity.

(4) On February 25, 2010, Claimant was sent a Notice of Case Action (DHS-1605) stating her Family Independence Program (FIP) case would close and that she would be removed from her Food Assistance Program (FAP) group.

(5) On March 1, 2010, Claimant submitted a timely request for hearing. Claimant's FIP benefits continued pending this hearing. Due to BRIDGES computer programming Claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) sanction was applied and the Department case worker was unable to restore the original amount of benefits.

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 (formerly known as the Family

Independence Agency) 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 Program Reference Manual (PRM).

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

Department policy provides the following guidance for case workers. The Department's policies are available on the internet through the Department's website.

**FAILURE TO MEET EMPLOYMENT AND/OR
SELSUFFICIENCY- RELATED REQUIREMENTS: FIP**

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

All Work Eligible Individual (WEI) and adult non-WEIs (except ineligible grantees, clients deferred for lack of child care (DC) and disqualified aliens), see [BEM 228](#), who fail, without good cause, to participate in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, must be penalized.

Depending on the case situation, penalties include the following:

- Delay in eligibility at application.
- Ineligibility (denial or termination of FIP with no minimum penalty period).
- Case closure for a minimum of three or 12 months.

See [BEM 233B](#) for the Food Assistance Program (FAP) policy when the FIP penalty is closure. For the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) penalty policy, see [BEM 233C](#).

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH EMPLOYMENT AND/OR SELFSUFFICIENCYRELATED 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:

Exception: Do not apply the three or 12 month penalty to ineligible caretakers, clients deferred for lack of child care (DC) and disqualified aliens. Failure to complete a FAST or FSSP results in closure due to failure to provide requested verification.

Clients can reapply at any time.

- 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.

Note: FIS should clear the FAST Fall Out Report and any FAST confirmation information the client has obtained before considering a client noncompliant for FAST non-completion.

- Develop a Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP) or a Personal Responsibility Plan and Family Contract (PRPFC).

Note: FIS must have scheduled a FSSP completion appointment with the client and the client failed to attend before considering a client noncompliant for FSSP non-completion.

- Comply with activities assigned to on the Family Self Sufficiency Plan (FSSP) or PRPFC.
- Provide legitimate documentation of work participation.
- 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.

Refusing Suitable Employment.

Refusing suitable employment means doing **any** of the following:

- Voluntarily reducing hours or otherwise reducing earnings.
- Quitting a job (see exception below).

Exception: This does NOT apply if:

- The MWA verifies that the client changed jobs or reduced hours in order to participate in an MWA approved education and training program.
- A teen parent or dependent child quits a seasonal job to return to a high school or GED program.
- Firing for misconduct or absenteeism (not for incompetence).

Note: Misconduct sufficient to warrant firing includes any action by an employee or other adult group member that is harmful to the interest of the employer, and is done intentionally or in disregard of the employer's interest, or is due to gross negligence. It includes but is not limited to drug or alcohol influence at work, physical violence, and theft or willful destruction of property connected with the individual's work.

- Refusing a bona fide offer of employment or additional hours **up to** 40 hours per week. A bona fide offer of employment means a definite offer paying wages of at least the applicable state minimum wage. The employment may be on a shift; full or part time **up to** 40 hours per week; and temporary, seasonal or permanent.

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.

NONCOMPLIANCE

PENALTIES AT APPLICATION

Noncompliance by a WEI while the application is pending results in **group** ineligibility. A WEI applicant who refused employment without good cause, within 30 days prior to the date of application or while the application is pending must have benefits delayed.

A good cause determination is not required for applicants who are noncompliant prior to FIP case opening.

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.

Begin the sanction period with the first pay period of a month. Penalties are automatically calculated by the entry of noncompliance without good cause on the FSSP. This applies to active FIP cases, including those with a member add who is a WEI JET participant.

TRIAGE

JET participants will not be terminated from a JET program without first scheduling a “trriage” meeting with the client to jointly

discuss noncompliance and good cause. Locally coordinate a process to notify the MW. A 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 requirements 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.

HEARINGS

Expedited Hearings

Staff must identify cases for SOAHR (administrative hearings) when a client files a hearing based on closure due to noncompliance with an employment and/or self-sufficiency related activity. SOAHR has agreed to expedite these hearing requests in an effort to engage clients in a timely manner and improve the state's overall work participation rate.

Write "**Expedited Hearing E&T**" at the top of the hearing request so that it can be easily identified as a priority. Refer to PAM 600, "[Expedited Hearings](#)" for additional instructions.

Hearing Decisions

When a hearing decision is upheld for noncompliance, impose the penalty for the first full month possible for either 3 or 12 months. Do not recoup benefits. (BEM 233A)

FAILURE TO MEET EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS: FAP

DEPARTMENT PHILOSOPHY

DHS requires participation in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities associated with the Family Independence Program (FIP) or Refugee Assistance Program (RAP). Applicants or recipients of Food Assistance Program (FAP) only must accept and maintain employment. There are consequences for client, who refuse to participate in FIP/RAP employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities or refuses to accept or maintain employment without good cause.

DEPARTMENT POLICY

The policies in this item apply to all FAP applicants and recipients age 16 and over. Noncompliance, without good cause, with employment requirements for FIP/RAP (see BEM 233A) may affect FAP if **both** programs were active on the date of the FIP noncompliance.

Michigan's FAP Employment and Training program is voluntary and penalties for noncompliance may only apply in the following two situations:

- Client is active FIP/ RAP and FAP and becomes noncompliant with a cash program requirement without good cause.
- Client is pending or active FAP only and refuses employment (voluntarily quits a job, is fired or voluntarily reduces hours of employment) without good cause.

At no other time is a client considered noncompliant with employment or self-sufficiency related requirements for FAP.

PROCESS FOR FIP/RAP ASSOCIATED

NONCOMPLIANCE

When you learn that a client is noncompliant do the following:

- Send the DHS-2444, Notice of Employment and/or Self-Sufficiency Related Noncompliance within three days of the noncompliance. Check all programs that apply to the noncompliance (FIP/RAP and/or RAP) and the related penalty count that applies to each as outlined on the form.
- Hold the triage appointment/phone conference and document the results in Bridges.

Note: If the client does not participate in the triage meeting, determine good cause for FAP based on information known at the time of the determination.

- Determine FAP good cause separately from the FIP/RAP based on FAP good cause reasons defined later in this item. If a good cause reason is selected for FIP/RAP it also applies to FAP. If the client does not meet one of the FIP/RAP good cause reasons in the drop down list, but does meet one of the FAP only good cause reasons, select the FAP only good cause reason to avoid client disqualification on FAP. Bridges makes both determinations simultaneously.

When To Disqualify

Disqualify a FAP group member for noncompliance when all the following exist:

- The client was **active** both FIP and FAP on the date of the FIP noncompliance, **and**
- The client did **not** comply with FIP/RAP employment requirements, **and**
- The client is subject to a penalty on the FIP/RAP program, **and**
- The client is **not** deferred from FAP work requirements (see [DEFERRALS](#) in BEM 230B), **and**
- The client did not have good cause for the noncompliance. (BEM 233B)

In this case the reason Claimant did not meet her participation requirements because she recorded time for on line job search activities, which exceeded the amount of time allowed for those job search activities. Claimant does not dispute her lack of sufficient participation prior to the compliance test or during the compliance test. Claimant testified that she did not know she was recording time in excess of the amount allowed. The Michigan Works Agency rules and regulations for job search activities was submitted into evidence along with credible evidence

that the information was available to all participants and was on the table where job search logs are obtained by participants. While Claimant's circumstances are unfortunate it was completely within Claimant's ability to avoid her failures to meet participation requirements. The policy cited above defines good cause 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. There is no good cause for Claimant's noncompliance.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the Department of Human Services properly sanctioned Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) and Food Assistance Program (FAP) cases for failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities.

It is ORDERED that the actions of the Department of Human Services, in this matter, are UPHELD.

/s/

Gary F. Heisler
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: May 17, 2010

Date Mailed: May 18, 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.

GFH/alc

cc:

