

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: 2010-6837

Issue No: 1038

Case No: [REDACTED]

Load No: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date:

March 24, 2010

Allegan 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 March 24, 2010.

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 October 26, 2009, the Department was informed by WF/JET that Claimant was a “no call, no show” to WF/JET on October 23, 2009 and was, therefore, in noncompliance with WF/JET requirements.

(3) On October 27, 2009, the Department sent Claimant a Notice of Noncompliance which stated in pertinent part - “Records show that you have refused or failed to participate as required in employment and/or self sufficiency related activities for FIP, RAP and FAP as noted below:.....A meeting has been scheduled to give you an opportunity to report and verify your reasons for non-compliance.” (Exhibits 1-2)

(4) On November 5, 2009, a triage meeting was held. Claimant informed the Department on October 23, 2009 that she was at the hospital with her daughter. The Department requested that Claimant provide documentation by October 26, 2009. Claimant’s daughter was discharged from the hospital on October 25, 2009. Claimant did not provide documentation by October 27, 2009 despite another request by the Department. Claimant appeared at the triage with documentation from the hospital, but the Department found no good cause. (Exhibits 3-11)

(5) On November 5, 2009, the Department received Claimant’s hearing request protesting the termination of her FIP 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 (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, there is no dispute that Claimant missed the day in question (October 23<sup>rd</sup>) and did not provide documentation by the date requested by the Department (October 26<sup>th</sup>). With that said, the Department should have done exactly what they did – schedule a triage to give Claimant an “opportunity to report and verify her reasons for non-compliance” as it states on the Notice of Noncompliance. The triage is a meeting between all involved parties to determine whether Claimant had good cause for missing WF/JET, not just a procedural necessity because she did not provide documentation by the date requested by the Department. If that was the end all, there would be no point to the triage.

It appears to the undersigned that is exactly what happened. Claimant was at the hospital with her daughter for 4 days and had all the paperwork to prove it. She testified credibly that she brought the documentation to the triage and she even called a supervisor right after the triage to complain that the Department representatives already had their minds made up. The Department representative at the hearing, [REDACTED], spoke to a Department representative who was present at the triage, but [REDACTED] had no personal

knowledge as he was not present at the triage. The triage notes simply state – [REDACTED] attended triage. No good cause was found. 365 day sanction”.

With the above said, I do not find that the Department established that it acted in accordance with policy in making a no good cause determination and terminating Claimant’s FIP 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 FIP benefits. Accordingly, the Department’s FIP eligibility determination is REVERSED, it is SO ORDERED. The Department shall:

- (1) Reinstate Claimant’s FIP benefits retroactive to the closure date.
- (2) Issue Claimant supplemental benefits she is entitled to, if any.
- (3) Notify Claimant in writing of the Department’s revised determination.
- (4) 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: March 24, 2010

Date Mailed: March 25, 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 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.

SMB/db

cc:

