

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: 2010-14142

Issue No: 1025

Case No: [REDACTED]

Load No: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date:

February 18, 2010

Houghton 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 18, 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.
- (2) On September 4, 2009, the Office of Child Support (OCS) sent Claimant a Noncooperation Notice. (Exhibit 8)

(3) On September 28, 2009, the Department sent Claimant a Notice of Case Action which informed her that her FIP benefits would be cancelled effective November 1, 2009 if she did not contact the OCS and provide the necessary information. (Exhibit 16)

(4) Claimant received the Notice of Case Action and attempted to contact the OCS in early October and the OCS attempted to return Claimant's call(s). She then left a message for a supervisor and received a call back from him which resulted in a cooperation notice.

(5) On November 25, 2009, the OCS sent Claimant a Cooperation Notice. (Exhibit 3)

(6) On December 16, 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).

Families are strengthened when the children's needs are met. Parents have a responsibility to meet their children's needs by providing support and/or cooperating with

the department including the Office of Child Support (OCS), the Friend of the Court and the prosecuting attorney to establish and/or obtain support from the absent parent. Clients must comply with all requests for action or information needed to establish paternity and/or obtain child support on behalf of children for whom they received assistance unless a claim of good cause for not cooperating has been granted or is pending. Failure to cooperate without good cause results in disqualification. Disqualification includes member removal, denial of program benefits and/or case closure, depending on the program. BEM 255, p.1

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 no more than once. 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

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, Claimant testified that she did not receive the September 4, 2009 Noncooperation Notice and that the first time she knew there was an issue with the OCS was when she received the September 28, 2009 Notice of Case Action in early October 2009. Claimant immediately called the OCS and left messages and her calls were returned, but no contact was ever made until Claimant spoke with a supervisor on November 25, 2009, the date she became in cooperation. Claimant gave the supervisor the same information that she had left in her previous messages.

With the above said, I do not find that the Department acted in accordance with policy in 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 10, 2010

Date Mailed: March 10, 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:

