

STATE OF MICHIGAN
STATE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS AND RULES
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 201051508
Issue No: 1038
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
October 19, 2010
Saginaw County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Kevin Scully

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge by authority of MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37. Claimant's request for a hearing was received on August 9, 2010. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on Tuesday, October 19, 2010.

ISSUE

Whether the Department of Human Services (Department) properly sanctioned the Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case for noncompliance with the Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) program?

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 received FIP benefits until September 1, 2010.
2. The Department referred [REDACTED], a member of the Claimant's FIP group, to the Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) program as a condition of receiving FIP benefits.
3. On May 20, 2010, [REDACTED] was treated by an emergency room physician. Department Exhibits 7 – 10.
4. On June 14, 2010, [REDACTED] started new employment and his employment fulfilled his JET assignment. Department Exhibit 6.

5. [REDACTED] was noncompliant with the JET program when he quit his job on June 30, 2010. Department Exhibit 1 & 3.
6. The Department conducted a triage meeting on July 29, 2010. Department Exhibit 1.
7. On August 4, 2010, the Department notified the Claimant that it would terminate her FIP benefits as of September 1, 2010. Department Exhibit 11.
8. The Department received the Claimant's request for a hearing on August 9, 2010, 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), Reference Table Manual (RTM), 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. PEM 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 Michigan Works Agencies (MWAs). 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. PEM 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. PEM 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. PEM 233A, p. 9

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. PEM 233A, p. 4, 5

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 MWA. 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. PEM 233A, p. 9

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. PEM, Item 233A.

Noncompliance, without good cause, with employment requirements for FIP/RAP(SEE PEM 233A) may affect FAP if both programs were active on the date of the FIP noncompliance. PEM 233b, p. 1 The FAP group member should be disqualified 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/RA P program, and
- The client is not deferred from FAP work requirements, and
- The client did not have good cause for the noncompliance. PEM 233B, p.2

The Department should budget the Last FIP grant amount on the FAP budget for the number of months that corresponds with the FIP penalty (either three months for the first two noncompliances or 12 months for the third and subsequent noncompliances) after the FIP case closes for employment and/or self-sufficiency-related noncompliance. The Last FIP grant amount is the grant amount the client received immediately before the FIP case closed.

The Claimant was an ongoing FIP recipient until September 1, 2010. The Department referred a member of the Claimant's FIP group, [REDACTED], to the JET program as a condition of receiving FIP benefits. [REDACTED] was fulfilling his JET assignment through community service, but began new employment on June 14, 2010. [REDACTED] was noncompliant with the JET program when he quit his job on June 30, 2010. The Department held a triage meeting on July 29, 2010, where the Claimant was given the opportunity to establish good cause for [REDACTED]'s noncompliance with the JET program. The Department did not find good cause and sanctioned the Claimant's FIP case as of September 1, 2010.

The Claimant argued that [REDACTED] did have good cause for his noncompliance with the JET program. The Claimant argued that [REDACTED] was physically unfit to continue working at his job and that he was unable to keep up with the demands of the job.

Good cause for noncompliance with the JET program can be established where the client is physically or mentally unfit for the job or activity, as shown by medical evidence or other reliable information. BEM 233A. This includes any disability-related limitations that preclude participation in a work and/or self-sufficiency-related activity and the disability-related needs or limitations may not have been identified or assessed prior to the noncompliance. BEM 233A.

Group member [REDACTED] argued that he was physically unfit for his job, which prevented him from continuing his employment. [REDACTED] offered documentation of a visit to the emergency room on May 20, 2010, as medical evidence showing that he was physically unfit for his job. [REDACTED] documentation included the statement of his treating physician that he suffered from an exercise-induced heart ailment. Although the visit to the Emergency room occurred before [REDACTED] started his employment, he argued that this is evidence that he was never fit to work at this job.

However, the [REDACTED]'s medical documentation did not include instructions to refrain from performing work, or place restrictions on the work that he could perform. [REDACTED] was fit enough that he was able to switch from community service work to employment at a laundrymat. [REDACTED] worked at this employment until June 30, 2010, when he felt that he could no longer continue. There is no evidence that [REDACTED] made an attempt to seek a special accommodation so that he could continue his employment.

The Claimant has failed to establish that [REDACTED] was physically unfit to continue his employment that was terminated on June 30, 2010. The Department's determination that the Claimant did not have good cause for [REDACTED]'s noncompliance with the JET program is reasonable, and the Department has established that it properly sanctioned the Claimant's JET case for noncompliance with the JET program.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the Department acted in accordance with policy when it sanctioned the Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case for noncompliance with the Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) program.

The Department's FIP sanction is AFFIRMED. It is SO ORDERED.

___/s/

Kevin

Scully
Administrative Law Judge
for Duane Berger, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: January 6, 2011

Date Mailed: January 6, 2011

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.

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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.

KS/alc

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