

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: [REDACTED]

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon the Department of Human Services (department) request for a disqualification hearing. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] The Respondent, Antonio Woodruff, appeared and provided testimony.

ISSUE

Whether Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) of the Food Assistance Program (FAP) and whether Respondent received an overissuance of benefits that the department is entitled to recoup?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. The department's [REDACTED] filed a hearing request to establish an overissuance of FAP benefits received by Respondent as a result of Respondent having committed an [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] also requested that Respondent be disqualified from receiving program benefits.
2. On [REDACTED], Respondent and his fiancé each completed Assistance Applications (DHS-1171), seeking FAP benefits for themselves. In doing so, both applicants acknowledged their understanding that a failure to give timely, truthful, complete and accurate information about their circumstances could result in a civil or criminal action or an administrative claim against them. Both applicants also reported Respondent's fiancé's continued receipt of biweekly earned income from her employer, [REDACTED].

██████████ and indicated her hourly rate of pay was ██████████ and her last pay check dated ██████████. (Department Exhibits 13-27).

3. The department subsequently approved Respondent for the receipt of FAP benefits. In doing so, the department neither sought verification of Respondent's reported income nor included Respondent's reported income in its calculated FAP budget.
4. On ██████████, the department obtained information from a ██████████ indicating that Respondent's fiancé received earned income from ██████████ from ██████████ (Department Exhibits 43-44).
5. On ██████████, the department sought, and subsequently received on ██████████ and ██████████, two verifications of employment from Sundance Inc. (██████████ verifying that Respondent's fiancé has been employed with its company since ██████████. The verifications further indicated that Respondent's fiancé was paid biweekly based on a varied schedule and her current hourly rate of pay was ██████████ but was \$ ██████████ at the start of her employment. (Department Exhibits 31-42).
6. Based on the employment verifications received by the department, the department determined that Respondent received an overissuance of FAP benefits in the amount of ██████████ for the time period of ██████████. (Department Exhibits 45-79).
7. Respondent had not committed any previous intentional program violations of the FAP program. (Department Exhibit 1).

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 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 Bridges Reference Manual (BRM).

In this case, the department has requested a disqualification hearing to establish an overissuance of FAP benefits as a result of an IPV and the department has asked that Respondent be disqualified from receiving benefits. The department's manuals provide the following relevant policy statements and instructions for department caseworkers:

BENEFIT OVERISSUANCES

DEPARTMENT POLICY

All Programs

When a client group receives more benefits than they are entitled to receive, DHS must attempt to recoup the overissuance (OI). BAM, Item 700, p. 1.

Definitions

The **Automated Recoupment System (ARS)** is the part of CIMS that tracks all FIP, SDA and FAP OIs and payments, issues automated collection notices and triggers automated benefit reductions for active programs.

A **claim** is the resulting debt created by an overissuance of benefits.

The **Discovery Date** is determined by the Recoupment Specialist (RS) for a client or department error. This is the date the OI is known to exist and there is evidence available to determine the OI type. For an Intentional Program Violation (IPV), the Office of Inspector General (OIG) determines the discovery date. This is the date the referral was sent to the prosecutor or the date the OIG requested an administrative disqualification hearing.

The **Establishment Date** for an OI is the date the DHS-4358A-D, Repay Agreement, is sent to the client and for an IPV, the date the DHS-4357 is sent notifying the client when the disqualification and recoupment will start. In CIMS the "establishment date" has been renamed "notice sent date."

An **overissuance (OI)** is the amount of benefits issued to the client group or CDC provider in excess of what they were eligible to receive. For FAP benefits, an OI is also the amount of benefits trafficked (traded or sold).

Overissuance Type identifies the cause of an overissuance.

Recoupment is a DHS action to identify and recover a benefit OI. BAM 700, p. 1.

PREVENTION OF OVERISSUANCES

All Programs

DHS must inform clients of their reporting responsibilities and act on the information reported within the Standard of Promptness (SOP).

During eligibility determination and while the case is active, clients are repeatedly reminded of reporting responsibilities, including:

- . Acknowledgments on the application form, **and**
- . Explanation at application/redetermination interviews, **and**
- . Client notices and program pamphlets.

DHS must prevent OIs by following BAM 105 requirements and by informing the client or authorized representative of the following:

- . Applicants and recipients are required by law to give complete and accurate information about their circumstances.
- . Applicants and recipients are required by law to promptly notify DHS of all changes in circumstances within 10 days. FAP Simplified Reporting (SR) groups are required to report only when the group's actual gross monthly income exceeds the SR income limit for their group size.
- . Incorrect, late reported or omitted information causing an OI can result in cash repayment or benefit reduction.
- . A timely hearing request can delete a proposed benefit reduction.

INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION

DEFINITIONS

All Programs

Suspected IPV

Suspected IPV means an OI exists for which all three of the following conditions exist:

- . The client **intentionally** failed to report information **or intentionally** gave incomplete or inaccurate information needed to make a correct benefit determination, **and**
- . The client was clearly and correctly instructed regarding his or her reporting responsibilities, **and**
- . The client has no apparent physical or mental impairment that limits his or her understanding or ability to fulfill their reporting responsibilities.

Intentional Program Violation (IPV) is suspected when there is clear and convincing evidence that the client or CDC provider has intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing or preventing reduction of program benefits or eligibility. BAM, Item 720, p. 1.

The federal Food Stamp regulations read in part:

- (c) Definition of Intentional Program Violation. Intentional Program Violation shall consist of having intentionally:
 - (1) made a false or misleading statement, or misrepresented, concealed or withheld facts; or
 - (2) committed any act that constitutes a violation of the Food Stamp Act, the Food Stamp Program Regulations, or any State statute for the purpose of using, presenting, transferring, acquiring, receiving, possessing or trafficking of coupons, authorization cards or reusable documents used as part of an automated benefit delivery system (access device). 7 CFR 273.16(c).

The federal Food Stamp regulations read in part:

- (6) Criteria for determining intentional program violation. The hearing authority shall base the determination of

intentional program violation on clear and convincing evidence which demonstrates that the household member(s) committed, and intended to commit, intentional program violation as defined in paragraph (c) of this section. 7 CFR 273.16(c)(6).

IPV

FIP, SDA AND FAP

IPV exists when the client/AR is determined to have committed an Intentional Program Violation by:

- . A court decision.
- . An administrative hearing decision.
- . The client signing a DHS-826, Request for Waiver of Disqualification or DHS-83, Disqualification Consent Agreement, or other recoupment and disqualification agreement forms. BAM, Item 720, p. 1.

FIP Only

The Aid to Families with Dependent Children (ADC) program was succeeded by the Family Independence Program (FIP). Treat these programs as interchangeable when applying IPV disqualification policy.

Example: Clients who committed an IPV while receiving ADC are to be disqualified under the FIP program. BAM, Item 720, p. 2.

FAP Only

IPV exists when an administrative hearing decision, a repayment and disqualification agreement or court decision determines FAP benefits were trafficked. BAM 720, p. 2.

MA and CDC Only

IPV exists when the client/AR or CDC provider:

- . is found guilty of fraud by a court, **or**
- . signs a DHS-4630 **and** the prosecutor or Office of Inspector General (OIG) authorizes recoupment in lieu of prosecution. BAM, Item 720, p. 2.

- . is found responsible for the IPV by an administrative law judge conducting an IPV or Debt Establishment Hearing. BAM, Item 720, p. 2.

OVERISSUANCE AMOUNT

FIP, SDA, CDC and FAP Only

The amount of the OI is the amount of benefits the group or provider actually received minus the amount the group was eligible to receive. BAM 720, p. 6.

FAP Only

When the OI involves two or more FAP groups which should have received benefits as one group, determine the OI amount by:

- . Adding together all benefits received by the groups that must be combined, **and**
- . Subtracting the correct benefits for the one combined group. BAM 720, pp. 6-7.

IPV Hearings

FIP, SDA, CDC, MA and FAP Only

OIG represents DHS during the hearing process for IPV hearings.

OIG requests IPV hearings for cases when no signed DHS-826 or DHS-830 is obtained, and correspondence to the client is not returned as undeliverable, or a new address is located.

OIG requests IPV hearing for cases involving:

1. FAP trafficking OIs that are not forwarded to the prosecutor.
2. Prosecution of welfare fraud or FAP trafficking is declined by the prosecutor for a reason other than lack of evidence, **and**

- . The total OI amount for the FIP, SDA, CDC, MA and FAP programs combined is \$500 or more, **or**
- . The total OI amount is less than \$500, **and**
 - .. The group has a previous IPV, **or**
 - .. The alleged IPV involves FAP trafficking, **or**
 - .. The alleged fraud involves concurrent receipt of assistance (see PEM 222), **or**
 - .. The alleged fraud is committed by a state/government employee.

Excluding FAP, OIG will send the OI to the RS to process as a client error when the DHS-826 or DHS-830 is returned as undeliverable and no new address is obtained. BEM, Item 720, p. 10.

DISQUALIFICATION

FIP, SDA and FAP Only

Disqualify an active **or** inactive recipient who:

- . is found by a court or hearing decision to have committed IPV, **or**
- . has signed a DHS-826 or DHS-830, **or**
- . is convicted of concurrent receipt of assistance by a court, **or**
- . for FAP, is found by SOAHR or a court to have trafficked FAP benefits.

A disqualified recipient remains a member of an active group as long as he lives with them. Other eligible group members may continue to receive benefits. BAM 720, pp. 12-13.

Standard Disqualification Periods

FIP, SDA and FAP Only

The standard disqualification period is used in all instances except when a **court** orders a different period (see **Non-Standard Disqualification Periods**, in this item).

Apply the following disqualification periods to recipients determined to have committed IPV:

- . One year for the first IPV
- . Two years for the second IPV
- . Lifetime for the third IPV

In this case, the department has established that Respondent was aware of the responsibility to report all household income and employment to the department. Indeed, *both Respondent and his fiancé did so* when they each completed an application for assistance on June 1, 2005. In their applications, Respondent and his fiancé each reported Respondent's fiancé's continued receipt of biweekly earned income from her employer, Taco Bell, and indicated her hourly rate of pay was \$6.25 and her last pay check dated May 31, 2005 was in the amount of \$196.23.

At the hearing, the department's representative admitted that, at the time of Respondent's application for assistance, the department neither sought to obtain employment verification of Respondent's fiancé's reported income, nor did the department include Respondent's' fiancé's reported income in the FAP budget, despite department policy requiring that this be done. Moreover, the department has no record indicating that it did otherwise.

This Administrative Law Judge therefore concludes that while the department has shown that Respondent received a \$2,869.00 overissuance of FAP benefits from June 1, 2005 through April 30, 2006, the department has not established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of maintaining, increasing or preventing a reduction of program benefits or eligibility. Consequently, the department's request for full restitution must be granted, however the department's request for FAP program disqualification must be denied.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that Respondent received an overissuance of FAP benefits from [REDACTED]. The Administrative Law Judge further decides, however, that the department did not establish by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of maintaining, increasing or preventing a reduction of program benefits or eligibility. Department shall not sanction the respondent from the FAP program.

Therefore, it is ordered that the department is entitled to recoup the overissuance of benefits Respondent ineligibly received. Respondent is ORDERED to reimburse the department for the [REDACTED] overissuance.

It is SO ORDERED.

/s/ _____
[REDACTED]

Date Signed: 4/11/11

Date Mailed: 4/11/11

NOTICE: The law provides that within 30 days of receipt of the above Decision and Order, the respondent may appeal it to the circuit court for the county in which she lives.

[REDACTED]