

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM  
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2011-26457

Issue No: 1038

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

St. Clair County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: C. Adam Purnell

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 received on January 28, 2011. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on July 7, 2011. Claimant personally appeared and provided testimony.

ISSUE

Whether the department properly terminated and sanctioned the claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits for noncompliance with Work First/Jobs, Education and Training (WF/JET) requirements?

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 a college student and a mandatory WF/JET participant during the relevant time period in question. (Hearing Summary).
2. On October 5, 2010, Claimant agreed to report to JET 20 hours of job search activities per week. (Department Exhibit 4).
3. On January 6, 2011, Claimant mailed the department her December 2010 attendance form which indicated that Claimant had 16 hours of unexcused absences in December and she failed to complete any job search hours during the weeks of December 20 and December 27, 2010. (Department Exhibits 1, 11 & 12).

4. On January 10, 2011, the department mailed Claimant a Notice of Noncompliance (DHS-2444) because she failed to participate as required in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities. The department informed Claimant that she was scheduled for an appointment on January 19, 2011, to demonstrate good cause for noncompliance. The notice explained that failure to show good cause could result in loss of benefits. (Department Exhibit 1).
5. On January 19, 2011, Claimant attended Triage and stated that she was on school break during the weeks of December 20 and December 27, 2010. Claimant stated that she was required to read and write papers as part of her class assignments during the holiday break from school. Claimant admits that she did not perform job search during the holiday break because another JET employee informed her that her class homework would serve as "alternate job search" or a sufficient substitute for her regular job search activities. Claimant's former staff worker denied Claimant's version of events. (Department Exhibit 11 & 12). No good cause was found. (Department Exhibit 11 & 12).
6. The department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action (DHS-1605) on January 20, 2011, informing Claimant that her FIP program was being closed as of February 1, 2011, because she failed to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities. (Department Exhibits 6 & 7).
7. Claimant submitted a hearing request on January 28, 2011, protesting the closure of her FIP benefits. (Request for a Hearing).
8. This is Claimant's second non-compliance with the FIP program. (Department Exhibit 3).

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The regulations governing the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are found in the Michigan Administrative Code, MAC R 400.901-400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because his claim for assistance is denied. MAC R 400.903(1).

Clients have the right to contest a department decision affecting eligibility or benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. The department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness. BAM 600.

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 (RFT), 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 the department when the client applies for cash assistance. Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program requirements, education and training opportunities, and assessments are covered by the JET case manager when a mandatory JET participant is referred at application. BEM 229.

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 Energy, Labor and Economic Growth (DELEG) 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. BEM 230A.

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.

JET participants will not be terminated from a JET program without first scheduling a “triage” meeting with the client to jointly discuss noncompliance and good cause. BEM 233A. The department coordinates the process to notify the MWA case manager of triage meetings including scheduling guidelines. BEM 233A.

Clients can either attend a meeting or participate in a conference call if attendance at the triage meeting is not possible. BEM 233A. If a client calls to reschedule an already scheduled triage meeting, the client is offered a telephone conference at that time. BEM 233A. Clients must comply with triage requirement within the negative action period. BEM 233A.

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.

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.

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. BEM 233A.

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 233A.

In this case, Claimant was required to participate in the JET/Work First program as a condition of receiving her FIP benefits. Claimant was on her holiday break from school during the weeks of December 20, 2010 and December 27, 2010. During this time period, Claimant was required to conduct 20 hours of job search activities. Claimant does not dispute that she did not complete her job search requirements during the relevant time period, but claims that another caseworker advised her that homework from school could be submitted in lieu of her job search requirement. The written JET agreement signed by Claimant belies this contention. The agreement signed by Claimant clearly provides that she is to complete 20 hours of job search activity during the break. In addition, the department had provided evidence that the department caseworker did not inform Claimant that her homework was a sufficient substitute for her job search requirement during the weeks of December 20, 2010 and December 27, 2010. This Administrative Law Judge finds that Claimant has not shown good cause for her noncompliance with employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities that were beyond her control nor did Claimant provide any reason for her absences.

The Administrative Law Judge finds that, based on the material and substantial evidence presented during the hearing, Claimant has failed to show good cause for failing to complete her attendance and job search activities. As a result, the department properly closed Claimant's FIP case for non-compliance.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department properly closed Claimant's FIP case for noncompliance with WF/JET requirements and the 3-month sanction is AFFIRMED.

It is SO ORDERED.

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
C. Adam Purnell  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 7/12/11

Date Mailed: 7/12/11

**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.

CAP/ds

■ [REDACTED]