

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2011-34351
Issue No: 1038, 6019

[REDACTED]

Genesee County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Suzanne L. Morris

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 held on June 16, 2011. The claimant appeared and provided testimony.

ISSUES

1. Did the department properly terminate and sanction the claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits for noncompliance with Work First/Jobs, Education and Training (WF/JET) requirements?
2. Did the department properly terminate the claimant's Child Development and Care benefits (CDC) for failure to provide the required verifications?

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 was referred to the WF/JET program as a mandatory participant.
2. A Triage meeting was held on March 31, 2011 pertaining to the claimant's previous noncompliance, which the claimant attended. After the triage was held, the claimant subsequently submitted medical documentation to the department on April 12, 2011 and was found to have provided good cause for her noncompliance. The claimant was then instructed to re-engage with the WF program by April 18, 2011 and was scheduled an appointment on the

- same date to begin her re-engagement (Department Exhibit 1). The claimant was sent a Jobs, Education and Training Appointment Notice (DHS-4785) advising her of said appointment on April 12, 2011 (Department Exhibit 2).
3. The claimant did not re-engage with the WF program as instructed and was issued a Notice of Noncompliance (DHS -2444) on April 21, 2011, scheduling a triage for April 27, 2011 (Department Exhibit 4-5).
 4. The claimant attended the triage appointment on April 27, 2011, but did not provide the department with documentation of good cause for her failure to re-engage the WF program. The claimant was mailed a letter from the department on April 27, 2011 indicating that due to her failure to provide good cause, her FIP case would be closed (Department Exhibit 14).
 5. The claimant was supplied with a Verification of School Enrolment form (FIA-3380) and a Verification Checklist (DHS 3503) on March 18, 2011 and asked to return such to the department by March 28, 2011 for purposes of confirming her further need for CDC benefits (Department Exhibit 16 and 15). The claimant never provided the completed form to the department. The department therefore, did not approve the continuation of the claimant's CDC benefits.
 6. The claimant submitted a hearing request on May 24, 2011.

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 Program Reference Manual (PRM).

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

The regulations that govern the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are contained in the Michigan Administrative Code (Mich Admin Code) Rules 400.901 through 400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to a recipient who is aggrieved by an agency action resulting in suspension, reduction, discontinuance, or termination of assistance. Mich Admin Code 400.903(1).

Department policy indicates:

DEPARTMENT PHILOSOPHY

FIP

DHS requires clients to participate in employment and self-sufficiency-related activities and to accept employment when offered. Our focus is to assist clients in removing barriers so they can participate in activities which lead to self-sufficiency. However, there are consequences for a client who refuses to participate, without good cause.

The goal of the FIP penalty policy is to obtain client compliance with appropriate work and/or self-sufficiency-related assignments and to ensure that barriers to such compliance have been identified and removed. The goal is to bring the client into compliance.

Noncompliance may be an indicator of possible disabilities. Consider further exploration of any barriers.

DEPARTMENT POLICY

FIP

A Work Eligible Individual (WEI), see BEM 228, who fails, without good cause, to participate in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, must be penalized.

See BEM 233B for the Food Assistance Program (FAP) policy when the FIP penalty is closure. For the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) penalty policy, see BEM 233C. BEM 233A, p. 1.

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH EMPLOYMENT AND/OR SELF-SUFFICIENCY-RELATED ACTIVITIES

As a condition of eligibility, all WEIs and non-WEIs must work or engage in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities. 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) or PRPFC.
- .. Appear for a scheduled appointment or meeting related to assigned activities.
- .. Provide legitimate documentation of work participation.
- .. 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.

GOOD CAUSE FOR NONCOMPLIANCE

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. Document the good cause determination in Bridges and the FSSP under the "Participation and Compliance" tab.

See "School Attendance" BEM 201 for good cause when minor parents do not attend school.

Employed 40 Hours

Client Unfit

Good cause includes the following:

- . The person is working at least 40 hours per week on average and earning at least state minimum wage.
- . The client is physically or mentally unfit for the job or activity, as shown by medical evidence or other reliable information. This includes any disability-related limitations that preclude participation in a work and/or self-sufficiency-related activity. The disability-related needs or limitations may not have been identified or assessed prior to the noncompliance.

Illness or Injury

The client has a debilitating illness or injury, or an immediate family member's illness or injury requires in-home care by the client.

Reasonable Accommodation

The DHS, employment services provider, contractor, agency, or employer failed to make reasonable accommodations for the client's disability or the client's needs related to the disability. BEM 233A, pp. 3-4.

No Child Care

The client requested Child Day Care Services (CDC) from DHS, the MWA, or other employment services provider prior

to case closure for noncompliance and CDC is needed for a CDC-eligible child, but none is appropriate, suitable, affordable and within reasonable distance of the client's home or work site.

- . **Appropriate.** The care is appropriate to the child's age, disabilities and other conditions.
- . **Reasonable distance.** The total commuting time to and from work and child care facilities does not exceed three hours per day.
- . **Suitable provider.** The provider meets applicable state and local standards. Also, providers (e.g., relatives) who are NOT registered/licensed by the DHS Office of Child and Adult Services must meet DHS enrollment requirements for day care aides or relative care providers. See PEM 704.
- . **Affordable.** The child care is provided at the rate of payment or reimbursement offered by DHS.

No Transportation

The client requested transportation services from DHS, the MWA, or other employment services provider prior to case closure and reasonably priced transportation is not available to the client.

Illegal Activities

The employment involves illegal activities.

Discrimination

The client experiences discrimination on the basis of age, race, disability, gender, color, national origin, religious beliefs, etc. BEM 233A, p. 4.

Unplanned Event or Factor

Credible information indicates an unplanned event or factor which likely prevents or significantly interferes with employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities. Unplanned events or factors include, but are not limited to the following:

- . Domestic violence.
- . Health or safety risk.
- . Religion.
- . Homelessness.
- . Jail.
- . Hospitalization.

Comparable Work

The client quits to assume employment comparable in salary and hours. The new hiring must occur before the quit.

Long Commute

Total commuting time exceeds:

- . Two hours per day, NOT including time to and from child care facilities, **or**
- . Three hours per day, including time to and from child care facilities. BEM 233A, pp.4-5.

EFIP

EFIP unless noncompliance is job quit, firing or voluntarily reducing hours of employment.

NONCOMPLIANCE PENALTIES FOR ACTIVE FIP CASES AND MEMBER ADDS

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 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 3 calendar months.
- . For the third and subsequent occurrence on the FIP case, close the FIP for 12 calendar months.

- . The penalty counter also begins April 1, 2007 regardless of the previous number of noncompliance penalties.

TRIAGE

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. Locally coordinate a process to notify the MWA case manager of triage meetings including scheduling guidelines.

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

When a phone triage is conducted for a first noncompliance and the client agrees to comply, complete the DHS-754, First Noncompliance Letter, as you would complete in a triage meeting. Note in the client signature box “Client Agreed by Phone”. Immediately send a copy of the DHS-754 to the client and phone the JET case manager if the compliance activity is to attend JET.

Determine good cause 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.

If the FIS, JET case manager, or MRS counselor do not agree as to whether “good cause” exists for a noncompliance, the case must be forwarded to the immediate supervisors of each party involved to reach an agreement.

DHS must be involved with all triage appointment/phone calls due to program requirements, documentation and tracking.

Note: Clients not participating with JET must be scheduled for a “triage” meeting between the FIS and the client. This does not include applicants. BEM 233A, p. 7.

Good Cause Established

If the client establishes good cause within the negative action period, do **NOT** impose a penalty. See "Good Cause for Noncompliance" earlier in this item. Send the client back to JET, if applicable, after resolving transportation, CDC, or other factors which may have contributed to the good cause. Do not enter a new referral on ASSIST. Enter the good cause reason on the DHS-71 and on the FSSP under the "Participation and Compliance" tab.

Good Cause NOT Established

If the client does NOT provide a good cause reason within the negative action period, determine good cause based on the best information available. If no good cause exists, allow the case to close. If good cause is determined to exist, delete the negative action. BEM 233A, pp. 10-11.

Noncompliance is defined by department policy as failing or refusing to do a number of activities, such as attending and participating with WF/JET, completing the FAST survey, completing job applications, participating in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, providing legitimate documentation of work participation, etc. BEM 233A.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant was noncompliant with WF/JET program requirements by not re-engaging with WF and failing to attend her WF appointment on April 18, 2011. The claimant testified that she was unaware of her appointment and the date she was scheduled to re-engage because her home was vandalized and she was staying temporarily with her sister. The claimant further testified that she did not return to her residence to retrieve the mail until after her scheduled appointment date. However, the claimant did testify that she was aware that the department was sending her notice as to the date she would have to re-engage in the WF program. The claimant also testified that she did not contact the department to notify them of her change in circumstances and temporary living arrangement. The claimant's assertion that she did not receive notice of her appointment due to her temporary change in her living situation does not constitute good cause to reverse the department's actions.

Good cause is defined as 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. BEM 233A. The claimant has not provided any documentation of good cause for her noncompliance.

The Child Development and Care program is established by Titles IVA, IVE and XX of the Social Security Act, the Child Care and Development Block Grant of 1990, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The program is implemented by Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 98 and 99. The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) provides services to adults and children pursuant to MCL 400.14(1) and MAC R 400.5001-5015. Department policies are contained in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

Department policy states:

CLIENT OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility to Cooperate

All Programs

Clients must cooperate with the local office in determining initial and ongoing eligibility. This includes completion of the necessary forms. BAM 105.

Refusal to Cooperate Penalties

All Programs

Clients who are able but refuse to provide necessary information or take a required action are subject to penalties. BAM 105.

Verifications

All Programs

Clients must take actions within their ability to obtain verifications. DHS staff must assist when necessary. See BAM 130 and BEM 702. BAM 105.

Assisting the Client

All Programs

The local office must assist clients who ask for help in completing forms (including the DCH-0733-D) or gathering verifications. Particular sensitivity must be shown to clients

who are illiterate, disabled or **not** fluent in English. BAM 105.

Verification is usually required at application/redetermination **and** for a reported change affecting eligibility or benefit level. BAM 130.

Obtaining Verification

All Programs

Tell the client what verification is required, how to obtain it and the due date (see “**Timeliness Standards**” in this item). Use the DHS-3503, Verification Checklist, or for MA redeterminations, the DHS-1175, MA Determination Notice, to request verification. BAM 130.

The client must obtain required verification, but you must assist if they need and request help.

If neither the client nor you can obtain verification despite a reasonable effort, use the best available information. If **no** evidence is available, use your best judgment. BAM 130.

Timeliness Standards

FIP, SDA, CDC, FAP

Allow the client 10 calendar days (**or** other time limit specified in policy) to provide the verification you request. BAM 130.

Exception: For CDC only, if the client cannot provide the verification despite a reasonable effort, extend the time limit at least once.

Verifications are considered to be timely if received by the date they are due. For electronically transmitted verifications (fax, email), the date of the transmission is the receipt date. Verifications that are submitted after the close of business hours through the drop box or by delivery of a DHS representative are considered to be received the next business day.

Send a negative action notice when:

- . the client indicates refusal to provide a verification, **or**
- . the time period given has elapsed and the client has **not** made a reasonable effort to provide it. BAM 130.

Note: For FAP only, if the client contacts the department prior to the due date requesting an extension or assistance in obtaining verifications, you must assist them with the verifications but do not grant an extension. Explain to the client they will not be given an extension and their case will be denied once the VCL due date is passed. Also, explain their eligibility will be determined based on their compliance date if they return required verifications. Re-register the application if the client complies within 60 days of the application date; see BAM 115, Subsequent Processing. BAM 130.

Claimants are required to comply with the local office to allow the department to determine initial or ongoing eligibility. BAM 105. The department informs the client what verification is required, how to obtain it, and the due date by using the Verification Checklist form (DHS-3503). BAM 130. Clients are provided ten days to return the verifications, but can request an extension of time to provide the verifications. BAM 130. If the time period to provide the verifications elapses and the verifications have not been provided, the department is directed to send a negative action notice. BAM 130.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant was sent the proper verification forms by the department on March 18, 2011 for the client to verify a continued need reason for CDC benefits. These forms were not returned to the department nor was an extension requested by the claimant. The claimant testified that she did not receive the forms mailed by the department and offered no other explanation for her failure to submit them. However, these forms were properly addressed and mailed to the claimant's address of record. The claimant has not provided justification for her failure to submit the verification forms to the department.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that. The department properly terminated the claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits for noncompliance with WF/JET requirements. The department also properly terminated the claimant's CDC case for lack of verification.

Accordingly, the department's actions are UPHeld. SO ORDERED.

/s/

Suzanne L. Morris
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 6/24/11

Date Mailed: 6/24/11

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 mailing 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.

SM/ds

