

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 201142931  
Issue No.: 1038  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: August 115, 2011  
Wayne County DHS (43)

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Lynn M. Ferris

**HEARING DECISION**

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon the claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on August 115, 2011. The claimant appeared and testified. [REDACTED], Assistance Payments Supervisor appeared on behalf of the Department.

**ISSUE**

Whether the Department properly sanctioned and closed the Claimant's cash assistance (FIP) case for non compliance with work related activities without good cause.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

1. The Claimant was assigned to attend the Work First program. The Claimant attended orientation.
2. The Claimant became ill with pneumonia and advised the Work First worker that she was ill; and continued to update the worker on her condition.
3. The Department issued a notice of non compliance on May 23, 2011 scheduling a triage for May 31, 2011.

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4. The Claimant was not asked to submit medical substantiation for her illness and absence from the Work First program.
5. The Claimant was sanctioned and her FIP case closed effective August 1, 2011.
6. The Claimant did not attend the triage as she did not receive notice of the triage. The Claimant has had difficulty with receiving her mail and had spoken to the post office regarding the failure to receive her mail.
7. The Department issued a notice of case action, which sanctioned and closed the Claimant's FIP cash assistance case for non compliance with work related activities.
8. The Claimant provided a doctor's excuse indicating that she was under doctor's care for pneumonia from 5/20/11 to 7/15/11. Claimant Exhibit 1 and Exhibit 3.
9. No one from the Work First program attended the hearing, so no one testified with first hand knowledge regarding the triage and events which caused the Claimant to be in non compliance.
10. The Claimant requested a hearing on July 5, 2011 protesting the closure of her FIP case.

### **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"), formerly known as the Family Independence Agency, administers the FIP program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.* and Michigan Administrative Code Rules 400.3101-3131. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual ("BAM"), the Bridges Eligibility Manual ("BEM"), and the Bridges Reference Manual ("BRM").

DHS requires clients to participate in employment and self-sufficiency related activities and to accept employment when offered. BEM 233A All Work Eligible Individuals ("WEI") are required to participate in the development of a Family Self-Sufficiency Plan ("FSSP") unless good cause exists. BEM 228 As a condition of eligibility, all WEIs must engage in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities. BEM 233A The WEI is considered non-compliant for failing or refusing to appear and participate with the Jobs, Education, and Training Program ("JET") or other employment service provider. 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. BEM 233A Failure to comply without good cause results in FIP closure. BEM 233A The first and second occurrences of non-compliance

results in a 3 month FIP closure. BEM 233A The third occurrence results in a 12 month sanction.

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 In processing a FIP closure, the Department is required to send the client a notice of non-compliance, DHS-2444, which must include the date(s) of the non-compliance; the reason the client was determined to be non-compliant; and the penalty duration. BEM 233A In addition, a triage must be held within the negative action period. BEM 233A A good cause determination is made during the triage and prior to the negative action effective date. BEM 233A.

In this case, the Claimant did not receive the notice of non compliance and did not attend the triage. The Claimant credibly testified that she had trouble with receiving her mail and had been to the post office to resolve the situation. Because the Claimant did not receive notice of the triage, she did not have an opportunity to demonstrate good cause.

Good cause is demonstrated when factors outside of the control of the non compliant person causes them to be absent. Illness is such a reason. In this case, the Claimant provided through her testimony and through a doctor's note that she had been diagnosed and treated for pneumonia. Exhibit 3 and Claimant Exhibit 1. This is good cause, and thus the Department's decision closing the Claimant's FIP case was in error, as the Claimant has demonstrated a good cause reason for her non attendance at the work first program. BEM 233A, pages 3 and 4.

### **DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds that the Department improperly closed and sanctioned the Claimant's FIP case for 3 months, as the Claimant demonstrated good cause for her failure to attend the Work First program due to illness, and therefore its determination is REVERSED.

Accordingly it is ORDERED:

1. The Department shall reopen and reinstate the Claimant's FIP case retroactive to the date of closure due to non compliance with Work First.
2. The Department shall issue a supplement to the Claimant for FIP benefits she was otherwise entitled to receive, in accordance with Department policy.

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3. The Department shall delete and remove from the Claimant's case record and the Bridges system, the sanction it imposed arising out of the triage of May 31, 2011.



Lynn M. Ferris  
Administrative Law Judge  
For Maura Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: August 17, 2011

Date Mailed: August 17, 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 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.

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