

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

██████████
██████████████████
██████████████████

Reg. No: 2011-573

Issue No: 1038

Case No: ██████████

Load No: ██████████

Hearing Date:

December 14, 2010

Saginaw County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Gary F. Heisler

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 hearing was held on December 14, 2010. Claimant appeared and testified.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services properly sanction Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case for failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities?

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 an ongoing recipient of Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits. Claimant's husband, ██████████ was a mandatory participant in the Michigan Works Agency/Jobs Education and Training Program (JET).
- (2) On July 12, 2010 JET sent a ██████████ a letter informing him of mandatory training to attend on July 21, 2010.
- (3) On July 15, 2010 ██████████ was at JET and was given a copy of the training letter.
- (4) On July 21, 2010 ██████████ did not attend the mandatory training as assigned.

- (5) On July 22, 2010 the Michigan Works Agency/Jobs Education and Training Program (JET) requested a triage due to Claimant's failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities.
- (6) On August 16, 2010 [REDACTED] was sent a Notice of Non-Compliance (DHS-2444) which scheduled a triage meeting for August 26, 2010.
- (7) On August 26, 2010 [REDACTED] participated in the triage meeting. The Department determined there was no good cause for his failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities.
- (8) On September 7, 2010 Claimant was sent a Notice of Case Action (DHS-1605) stating that her Family Independence Program (FIP) case would be sanctioned.
- (9) On September 20, 2010 Claimant submitted a timely request for hearing.

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 (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) 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).

Department policy provides the following guidance for case workers. The Department's policies are available on the internet through the Department's website.

BEM 233A FAILURE TO MEET EMPLOYMENT AND/OR SELFSUFFICIENCY- RELATED REQUIREMENTS: FIP

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

All Work Eligible Individual (WEI) and adult non-WEIs (except ineligible grantees, clients deferred for lack of child care (DC) and disqualified aliens), see [BEM 228](#), who fail, without good cause, to participate in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, must be penalized.

Depending on the case situation, penalties include the following:

- Delay in eligibility at application.
- Ineligibility (denial or termination of FIP with no minimum penalty period).
- Case closure for a minimum of three or 12 months.

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](#).

NONCOMPLIANCE WITH EMPLOYMENT AND/OR SELFSUFFICIENCY 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:

Exception: Do not apply the three or 12 month penalty to ineligible caretakers, clients deferred for lack of child care and disqualified aliens.

Failure to complete a FAST or FSSP results in closure due to failure to provide requested verification. Clients can reapply at any time.

- 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.

Note: FIS should clear any alerts relating to rejected JET refunds and any FAST confirmation information the client has obtained before considering a client noncompliant for FAST completion.

- Develop a Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP).

Note: FIS must have scheduled a FSSP completion appointment with the client and the client failed to attend before considering a client noncompliant for FSSP completion.

- Comply with activities assigned on the 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.

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.

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.

Begin the sanction period with the first pay period of a month. Penalties are automatically calculated by the entry of noncompliance without good cause on the FSSP. This applies to active FIP cases, including those with a member add who is a WEI JET participant.

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 requirements 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.

In this case [REDACTED] does not dispute missing the mandatory training. [REDACTED] admits he was given verbal notice of the training. However, he asserts he did not get the letter that was mailed to him on July 12, and did not actually get a copy on July 15. [REDACTED] testified that on July 15 the JET worker he met with had a copy of the letter for him but he must have left it on her desk or something because he never had one at home. [REDACTED] asserts he has good cause because he did not get notice in the form of an actual document.

The concept of notice is a critical factor in many legal determinations of consequences for an individual's act or absence of action. Stated as a simple proposition, a person should not be penalized for failing to take an action if they did not know they were required to take that act. To address ██████ assertion requires defining the required manner of notice to be given before his failure to attend the training can be held against him. The legal concept of notice is present in all aspects of the Department's procedures. Notice is the reason for all the fine print, signatures, and voluminous documentation required. The Department's policies do address the fact that notice of a determination or action affecting clients' benefits is required and defines classifications of that notice based on the amount of time the notice is given, before the intended action. However, the policies do not address the specific form of notice required for the circumstances found in this case. Consulting Black's Law Dictionary reveals there are numerous classifications of notice in the law: statutory; actual; constructive; express, implied; personal; presumptive; public; . . . It is undisputed that ██████ received actual, express, personal notice of the requirement to attend the training. It is obvious that JET intended to provide written notice to ██████ and ██████ testimony reveals that he believes written notice would be sufficient.

The facts in this case show that ██████ did get written notice of the mandatory training. ██████ testimony is that the JET worker he met with on July 15 had a copy of the letter for him. Whether ██████ took the letter or left it does not change the fact that he got written notice. The evidence does not establish good cause for ██████ failure to attend the mandatory training on July 21, 2010.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the Department of Human Services properly sanctioned Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case for failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities.

It is ORDERED that the actions of the Department of Human Services, in this matter, are UPHeld.

/s/ _____
Gary F. Heisler
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: January 3, 2011

Date Mailed: January 3, 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.

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.

GFH/tg

cc:

