

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

IN THE MATTER OF

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2011-27275

Issue No: 1038

[REDACTED]

Saginaw County DHS

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Vicki L. Armstrong on behalf of Suzanne Sonneborn

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 March 10, 2011. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on June 15, 2011. Claimant personally appeared and provided testimony.

ISSUE

Whether the department properly terminated and sanctioned 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 mandatory WF/JET participant. (Hearing Summary).
2. On December 8, 2010, JET referred Claimant to the department for Triage because she failed to participate in her required community service. Claimant completed 0 out of the required 80 hours for the month of November 2010. (Department Exhibit 5).
3. On December 22, 2010, the department mailed Claimant a Notice of Noncompliance 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 6, 2011, to demonstrate good cause for noncompliance. The notice explained that failure to show good cause could result in loss of benefits. (Department Exhibits 1-2).

4. On January 6, 2011, Claimant failed to attend Triage and did not submit any documentation showing good cause for failing to complete the required 80 hours of community service for the month of November 2010. (Department Exhibits 5-6).
5. The department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action on January 28, 2011, informing Claimant that her FIP program was being closed as of March 1, 2011, because she failed to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities and because this was her fourth noncompliance, her group would not receive benefits from March 1, 2011 through February 29, 2012. (Department Exhibits 7-9).
6. Claimant submitted a hearing request on March 10, 2011, protesting the closure of her FIP benefits. (Request for a Hearing).
7. This is Claimant's fourth non-compliance with the FIP program. (Department Exhibits 1-2).

#### 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). 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), and Reference Table Manual (RFT).

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. The department coordinates the 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, the client is offered a telephone conference at that time. Clients must comply with triage requirement within the negative action period.

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 credibly testified that she was in an abusive relationship and was unable to attend community service due to her black eyes, bruising and swollen face. Claimant stated she could not report the abuse to the police because she had warrants and children. Claimant testified her cell phone was not working because it had been smashed on the floor. Claimant admitted that she was not honest with her caseworker but she said she could not be at that time, because he was parked outside of her home and threatening her and she was unable to leave the home. Claimant testified that he was now incarcerated so she could be honest about what had been happening.

Claimant admitted that she knew the department was trying to contact her on her Triage date. However, Claimant could not explain why she did not receive the telephone calls or why, when the department called and was leaving a message, a recording came on and said "message deleted."

According to policy, Clients may be deferred in cases of domestic violence that can reasonably be expected to interfere with job requirements. However, Claimant admitted during the hearing that she did not inform the department of her domestic violence relationship. As a result, 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 80 hours of community service in the month of November 2010. 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 12-month sanction is AFFIRMED. It is SO ORDERED.

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/s/  
Vicki L. Armstrong  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 6/28/11

Date Mailed: 6/28/11

**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.

VLA/ds

■ [REDACTED]