

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2011-29811
Issue No: 1038

[REDACTED]

Allegan County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Vicki L. Armstrong

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 April 14, 2011. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on June 2, 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 November 4, 2010, Claimant was placed on probation for failing to attend job club because she did not wake up on time. (Department Exhibit 11).
3. On December 13, 2010, Claimant called in due to the bad roads. Claimant was informed that this would serve as another probation, because she could not be excused for lack of transportation. JET asked Claimant if she would like to sign up for Allegan County Transportation. Claimant declined. (Department Exhibit 10).
4. On March 3, 2011, Claimant called in due to bad roads. JET informed Claimant she would not be excused for the days she failed to show due to

bad roads because JET does not excuse for lack of transportation. Claimant was told that this was the second time she had called in for lack of transportation and if it happened again she would be in noncompliance. Claimant was told that Allegan County Transportation was available and she declined. (Department Exhibit 8).

5. Claimant failed to attend JET on March 30, 2011. Claimant called her JET worker and left a message that her car had broken down and she would be in later. (Hearing Summary).
6. On March 30, 2011, the department mailed Claimant a Notice of Noncompliance for failing to attend her job club class. Triage was scheduled for April 7, 2011 at 1:30 P.M. (Department Exhibits 4-5).
7. Triage was held on April 7, 2011. Claimant and her mother were in attendance. Because Claimant was already on probation for lack of transportation, and Claimant did not show for her job search class on March 30, 2011, the department found Claimant failed to show good cause. (Department Exhibit 6).
8. The department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action on April 8, 2011, informing Claimant that her FIP program was being closed as of May 1, 2011, because she failed to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities. (Department Exhibits 15-16).
9. Claimant submitted a hearing request on April 14, 2011, protesting the closure of her FIP benefits. (Request for a Hearing).
10. This is Claimant's second non-compliance with the FIP program. (Department Exhibits 15-16).

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. 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 was required to participate in the JET/Work First program as a condition of receiving her FIP benefits. Claimant failed to attend her job club classes on December 13, 2010, March 3, 2011 and March 30, 2011. A Triage was scheduled on April 7, 2011. Claimant attended Triage and explained that the car her mother was driving her in to JET had broken down. Claimant was unable to explain why she did not show up to job club once the vehicle was repaired, in which case it would have been noted as a tardy as opposed to a failing to attend and a noncompliance. Claimant was reminded that she was already on probation from a previous failure to attend. The department found that Claimant was noncompliant for not attending JET club on March 30, 2011.

During the hearing, Claimant testified that she did not attend job club because the car her mother was driving broke down. Claimant stated that she was less than a mile from job club and although she had called and told JET she would be there, once the car was fixed she went home because she believed she would be found in noncompliance either way and did not see the point in going.

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 missing her job club class. 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/_____
Vicki L. Armstrong
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 6/7/11

Date Mailed: 6/7/11

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

