

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No: 2012-16877
Issue No: 3008
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: January 11, 2012
County DHS Ingham

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Landis Y. Lain

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 January 11, 2012.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (the department) commit error when it closed claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) case?

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 FAP benefit recipient and a full time student at eh local university.
- (2) On October 8, 2011, the department received a semi-annual contact report from claimant. She attached one pay stub from 3p's payroll service. She also returned a new hire from for 3p's indicating that she was working 9 hours per week.
- (3) On October 21, 2011, the department caseworker sent claimant a verification checklist (VCL) requesting employment records from her loss of employment, and the last 30 days of check stubs or earnings statements. The records were due October 31, 2011.
- (4) On November 8, 2011, the department received the job loss verification from 3p's which indicated that claimant had quit her job.

- (5) On November 16, 2011, the department caseworker received the new hire verification from [REDACTED]. No pay statements from [REDACTED] were received.
- (6) On November 18, 2011, the department caseworker sent claimant notice that her Food Assistance benefits would be cancelled effective November 29, 2011, because claimant failed to verify or allow the department to verify necessary information.
- (7) On November 28, 2011 claimant filed a request for a hearing o contest the department's negative action.

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 or her claim for assistance has been 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 of that decision. BAM 600.

The Food Assistance Program (FAP) (formerly known as the Food Stamp (FS) program) is established by the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, and is implemented by the federal regulations contained in Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the FAP program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MAC R 400.3001-3015. Department policies are found in the Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

Pertinent Department policy dictates:

Cooperation, Verification, and Eligibility Determination

DEPARTMENT POLICY

All Programs

Clients have rights and responsibilities as specified in this item.

The local office must do **all** of the following:

- . Determine eligibility.

- . Calculate the level of benefits.
- . Protect client rights. BAM, Item 105, p. 1.

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. PAM, Item 105, p. 5.

Client Cooperation

The client is responsible for providing evidence needed to prove disability or blindness. However, you must assist the client when they need your help to obtain it. Such help includes the following:

- . Scheduling medical exam appointments
- . Paying for medical evidence and medical transportation
- . See PAM 815 and 825 for details. PEM, Item 260, p. 4.

A client who refuses or fails to submit to an exam necessary to determine disability or blindness **cannot** be determined disabled or blind and you may deny or close the case. PEM, Item 260, p. 4.

All Programs

Clients must completely and truthfully answer all questions on forms and in interviews. PAM, Item 105, p. 5.

The client might be unable to answer a question about himself or another person whose circumstances must be known. Allow the client at least 10 days (or other timeframe specified in policy) to obtain the needed information. PAM, Item 105, p. 5.

FAP Only

Do **not** deny eligibility due to failure to cooperate with a verification request by a person **outside** the group. In applying this policy, a person is considered a group member if residing with the group and is disqualified. PAM, Item 105, p. 5.

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. PAM, Item 105, p. 5.

Explain reporting requirements to all clients at application, redetermination and when discussing changes in circumstances. PAM, 105, p. 8.

Verifications

All Programs

Clients must take actions within their ability to obtain verifications. DHS staff must assist when necessary. See PAM 130 and PEM 702. PAM, Item 105, p. 8.

LOCAL OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES

All Programs

Ensure client rights described in this item are honored and that client responsibilities are explained in understandable terms. Clients are to be treated with dignity and respect by all DHS employees. PAM, Item 105, p. 8.

VERIFICATION AND COLLATERAL CONTACTS

DEPARTMENT POLICY

All Programs

Verification means documentation or other evidence to establish the accuracy of the client's verbal or written statements.

Obtain verification when:

- . required by policy. PEM items specify which factors and under what circumstances verification is required.
- . required as a local office option. The requirement **must** be applied the same for every client. Local requirements may **not** be imposed for MA, TMA-Plus or AMP without prior approval from central office.
- . information regarding an eligibility factor is unclear, inconsistent, incomplete or contradictory. The questionable information might be from the client or a third party. PAM, Item 130, p. 1.

Verification is usually required at application/redetermination **and** for a reported change affecting eligibility or benefit level. PAM, Item 130, p. 1.

Verification is **not** required:

- . when the client is clearly ineligible, or
- . for excluded income and assets **unless** needed to establish the exclusion. PAM, Item 130, p. 1.

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. PAM, Item 130, p. 2.

The client must obtain required verification, but you must assist if they need and request help. PAM, Item 130, p. 2.

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.

Exception: Alien information, blindness, disability, incapacity, inability to declare one's residence and, for FIP only, pregnancy must be verified. Citizenship and identity must be verified for clients claiming U.S. citizenship

for applicants and recipients of FIP, SDA and MA. PAM, Item 130, p. 3.

Timeliness Standards

All Programs (except TMAP)

Allow the client 10 calendar days (or other time limit specified in policy) to provide the verification you request. If the client cannot provide the verification despite a reasonable effort, extend the time limit at least once. PAM, Item 130, p. 4.

In the instant case claimant did not provide verification of employment to the department from Michigan State University. Claimant testified that she provided the department with the information they requested. She stated that they already had information from Michigan State University employment that her status has not changed with them. She was working three part time jobs while trying to attend school full time and she was working 20 hours for Michigan State at all times. Claimant testified that she thought that she needed to return the verifications that indicated how her circumstances had changed, which she did provide. The department caseworker testified that she remembered getting a telephone call from claimant's representative but did not remember what information they discussed. This Administrative Law Judge finds the department caseworker sent claimant a semi-annual contact report, which claimant filled out and returned. (Exhibits #1-2). She was also sent a new hire client notice to complete for 4 P's, which claimant did complete and return along with a check stub. (Exhibits #3-5). The department also was provided a verification of employment DHS-38 which indicated that claimant is expected to work 15 hours per week earning eight dollars per hour. (Exhibits #8-9). The department caseworker sent claimant a new hire notice for West Educational Leasing, which claimant did fill out and return. (Exhibits #10-11). No place in the request for information is it specified that claimant should provide information about her employment circumstances at [REDACTED]. No one from the department notified her that the information was missing. Therefore, claimant had good cause for failure to turn in verification information from Michigan State University. The department's actions must be reversed under the circumstances.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department has not established by the necessary competent, material and substantial evidence on the record that it was acting in compliance with department policy when it determined that claimant's FAP case should close based upon failure to provide employment verification in a timely manner.

Accordingly, the Department's decision is REVERSED. The department is ORDERED to reinstate claimant's Food Assistance benefits to the date of closure. The department is ORDERED to provide claimant with a verification checklist which requests specific information and give claimant 30 days to provide verification of income.

/s/

Landis Y. Lain
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 1/19/12

Date Mailed: 1/19/12

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.

LYL/ds

■ [REDACTED]