

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 201228267
Issue No.: 3002
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: February 29, 2012
County: Oakland DHS (04)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Christian Gardocki

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 following Claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on February 29, 2012 from Detroit, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included the above named claimant. Participants on behalf of Department of Human Services (DHS) included [REDACTED], Specialist.

ISSUE

The issue is whether DHS properly determined Claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefit issuance effective 12/2011.

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. Claimant was an ongoing FAP benefit recipient.
2. On an unspecified date, DHS redetermined Claimant's FAP benefit issuance effective 12/2011.
3. Claimant received \$1016/month in gross Retirement, Survivor, Disability, Insurance (RSDI).
4. Claimant had verified monthly medical expenses of \$63/month.
5. On an unspecified date, DHS determined Claimant was eligible for \$16/month in FAP benefits effective 12/2011.

6. On 1/24/12, Claimant requested a hearing to dispute the 12/2011 FPA benefit issuance.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Department policies are contained in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), and the Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

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 (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FAP pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3001 through R 400.3015.

Claimant requested a hearing concerning a FAP benefit issuance effective 12/2011. Claimant did not specifically identify why she thought that the reduction was improper, other than a general dissatisfaction in receiving fewer FAP benefits. The administrative hearing process can not address a general dissatisfaction with benefit issuances; the process may be used to review DHS actions for their correctness.

It should be noted that DHS explained that Claimant's FAP benefits were reduced from \$200 because DHS had previously failed to budget Claimant's RSDI income. Despite the plausible explanation, a benefit issuance can only be verified by examining the entire benefit calculation. BEM 556 outlines the proper procedures for calculating FAP benefits.

The FAP benefit calculation begins with an examination of income. It was not disputed that Claimant received \$1016/month in gross RSDI. For all programs, the gross amount of RSDI is countable income. BEM 503 at 20.

DHS uses certain expenses to determine net income for FAP eligibility and benefit levels. BEM 554 at 1. For groups without a senior (over 60 years old), disabled or disabled veteran (SDV) member, DHS considers the following expenses: child care and excess shelter (housing and utilities) up to a capped amount and court ordered child support and arrearages paid to non-household members. For groups containing SDV members, DHS also considers the medical expenses for the SDV group member(s) and the full excess shelter expense.

Verified medical expenses for SDV groups, child support and day care expenses are subtracted from Claimant's monthly countable income. Claimant noted having medical expenses of approximately \$63/month. DHS only counts medical expenses exceeding \$35/month. Thus, Claimant is entitled to a \$28/month credit for medical expenses which reduces the countable income amount to \$988.

Claimant's FAP benefit group received a standard deduction of \$146. RFT 255 at 1. The standard deduction is given to all FAP benefit groups, though the amount varies based on the benefit group size. The standard deduction is also subtracted from the countable monthly income to calculate the group's adjusted gross income. The adjusted gross income amount for 12/2011 is found to be \$842.

It was not disputed that Claimant did not verify any housing expenses. DHS gives a flat utility standard to all clients. BPB 2010-008. The utility standard of \$553 (see RFT 255) encompasses all utilities (water, gas, electric, telephone) and is unchanged even if a client's monthly utility expenses exceed the \$553 amount. The total shelter obligation is calculated by adding Claimant's housing expenses to the utility credit (\$553). The total shelter obligation is found to be \$553.

DHS only credits FAP benefit groups with what DHS calls an "excess shelter" expense. This expense is calculated by taking Claimant's total shelter obligation and subtracting half of Claimant's adjusted gross income. For 12/2011, Claimant's excess shelter amount is \$132.

The FAP benefit group's net income is determined by taking the group's adjusted gross income and subtracting the allowable excess shelter expense. The FAP benefit group net income is found to be \$710 for 12/2011. A chart listed in RFT 260 is used to determine the proper FAP benefit issuance. Based on Claimant's group size and net income, Claimant's proper FAP benefit amount is found to be \$16 for 12/2011, the same benefit issuance calculated by DHS.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, finds that the Department did act properly when determining Claimant's 12/2011 FAP benefit eligibility

Accordingly, the Department's AMP FIP FAP MA SDA CDC decision is AFFIRMED REVERSED for the reasons stated on the record.



Christian Gardocki
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: March 2, 2012

Date Mailed: March 2, 2012

NOTICE: Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS) 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. MAHS 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. (60 days for FAP cases)

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.

Claimant may request a rehearing or reconsideration for the following reasons:

- A rehearing **MAY** be granted if there is newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome of the original hearing decision.
- A reconsideration **MAY** be granted for any of the following reasons:
 - misapplication of manual policy or law in the hearing decision,
 - typographical errors, mathematical error, or other obvious errors in the hearing decision that effect the substantial rights of the claimant:
 - the failure of the ALJ to address other relevant issues in the hearing decision.

Request must be submitted through the local DHS office or directly to MAHS by mail at
Michigan Administrative Hearings
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P. O. Box 30639
Lansing, Michigan 48909-07322

CG/hw

cc:

