

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2012-34504
Issue No.: 2006
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: June 21, 2012
County: Wayne (82-19)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Robert J. Chavez

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 in-person hearing was held on June 21, 2012, from Inkster, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Did the Department properly deny Claimant's application close Claimant's case for:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Independence Program (FIP)? | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Medical Assistance (AMP)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Assistance Program (FAP)? | <input type="checkbox"/> State Disability Assistance (SDA)? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medical Assistance (MA)? | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Development and Care (CDC)? |

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 applied for benefits received benefits for:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Independence Program (FIP). | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Medical Assistance (AMP). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Assistance Program (FAP). | <input type="checkbox"/> State Disability Assistance (SDA). |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Medical Assistance (MA). | <input type="checkbox"/> Child Development and Care (CDC). |

2. On February 23, 2012, the Department
 denied Claimant's application closed Claimant's case
due to a paternity noncooperation action.
3. On February 23, 2012, the Department sent
 Claimant Claimant's Authorized Representative (AR)
notice of the denial. closure.
4. On February 23, 2012, Claimant filed a hearing request, protesting the
 denial of the application. closure of the case.

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 Family Independence Program (FIP) was established pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Public Law 104-193, 42 USC 601, *et seq.* The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FIP pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and 1999 AC, Rule 400.3101 through Rule 400.3131. FIP replaced the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program effective October 1, 1996.

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 1999 AC, Rule 400.3001 through Rule 400.3015.

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by the Title XIX of the Social Security Act and is implemented by Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Department of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the MA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MCL 400.105.

The Adult Medical Program (AMP) is established by 42 USC 1315, and is administered by the Department pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program, which provides financial assistance for disabled persons, is established by 2004 PA 344. The Department of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and 2000 AACS, Rule 400.3151 through Rule 400.3180.

The Child Development and Care (CDC) program is established by Titles IVA, IVE and XX of the Social Security Act, the Child Care and Development Block Grant of 1990, and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. The program is implemented by Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 98 and 99. The Department provides services to adults and children pursuant to MCL 400.14(1) and 1999 AC, Rule 400.5001 through Rule 400.5015.

Regulations governing the Office of Child Support (OCS) can be found in the Office of Child Support Policy Manual (OCSPM).

Clients must comply with all requests for action or information needed to establish paternity and/or obtain child support on behalf of children for whom they receive assistance, unless a claim of good cause for not cooperating has been granted or is pending. Failure to cooperate without good cause results in disqualification. Disqualification includes member removal, denial of program benefits, and/or case closure, depending on the program. BEM 255.

Noncooperation exists when the custodial parent (CP) does not respond to a request for action or does not provide information, and the process to establish paternity and/or a child support order cannot move forward without the CP's participation. A CP is in noncooperation with the IV-D program when the CP, without good cause, willfully and repeatedly fails or refuses to provide information and/or take an action needed to establish paternity or to obtain child support or medical support. OCSPM 2.15. IV-D staff apply noncooperation to a CP **only as a last resort** when no other option is available to move the IV-D case forward. OCSPM 2.3.

There is no minimum information requirement. CPs can be required to provide known or obtainable information about themselves, the child(ren) for whom support is sought, and the non-custodial parent (NCP) when needed to obtain support. OCSPM 2.3.1.

In evaluating cooperation, the IV-D worker should consider such factors as the CP's marital status, the duration of his/her relationship with the NCP, and the length of time since the CP's last contact with the NCP. OCSPM 2.3.1.

A CP can be required to cooperate by attesting under oath to the lack of information regarding an NCP. This may assist in determining cooperation in cases in which a CP's willingness to cooperate is questionable but there is insufficient evidence for a finding of noncooperation. The IV-D worker is not required to provide a CP with the opportunity to attest under oath if the CP has not demonstrated a willingness and good-faith effort to provide information. In this situation, the IV-D worker must evaluate whether the CP has knowingly withheld information or given false information, and base a decision on that evidence. OCSPM 2.3.5.

There is no evidence in this case that Claimant was willfully failing or refusing to cooperate. While OCS sent Claimant a notice that she had failed to cooperate, there is

no evidence in the case that Claimant did indeed fail to provide the information in question and, indeed, no evidence that **the Claimant even required child support.**

In fact, the Administrative Law Judge cannot even begin to speculate why OCS is even involved in the case, much less as to why Claimant was noncooperative.

OCS demanded from the Claimant information on the father, including the name, current address, and Social Security number (SSN), in order to obtain child support.

Claimant submitted into evidence a birth certificate showing the name of the father, including his SSN and residence; OCS, for some reason, could not identify the father from this information. The undersigned can only speculate that perhaps the type font was too small.

Claimant submitted a letter from the birth hospital certifying that the child in question had been born to the father OCS could not find information on. This letter again identified the father and gave his SSN.

Claimant submitted an affidavit of parentage filed with the Michigan Department of Community Health, identifying the father, giving an address for the father (which, incidentally, matched the address for the mother, indicating that perhaps the child did not actually need child support), and printing again the SSN of the father.

One would assume, as this document was on file with the State of Michigan Vital Records Department since July of 2005, that perhaps OCS would have access to this record. This assumption is apparently wrong.

In fact, one would assume that OCS would perform a modicum of investigation, including, perhaps, at a minimum, **checking the birth certificate which DHS had on file** before initiating noncooperation proceedings, as noncooperation is supposed to be a last resort. This assumption would also be wrong.

Finally, one would assume that OCS would check to make sure that Claimant actually needed child support before launching noncooperation proceedings. This assumption must also be wrong as, even though Claimant applied for benefits on behalf of her group, **which included the father, who therefore would be providing support by definition**, OCS continued to proceed with this action.

OCS initiated a noncooperation action against Claimant for failing to provide information that was publicly available, on a father who resided in the home and is a member of Claimant's benefit group. Not only was there no noncooperation, there was no need for child support.

This is a case that should never have reached the level it did. At some point in the process, either OCS or the Department should have realized that they either had the information they needed, or that the father was in the home. If the noncooperation

notice was entered in error, somebody, somewhere, should have looked at the case and realized the error. Claimant was never noncooperative; in order to be noncooperative, there has to be a need for child support in the first place.

Based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, the Administrative Law Judge concludes that the Department

properly denied Claimant's application improperly denied Claimant's application
 properly closed Claimant's case improperly closed Claimant's case

for: AMP FIP FAP MA SDA CDC.

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. did not act properly.

Accordingly, the Department's decision in this case REVERSED.

THE DEPARTMENT IS ORDERED TO DO THE FOLLOWING WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE DATE OF MAILING OF THIS DECISION AND ORDER:

1. Remove the noncooperation sanction from Claimant's case, and award to Claimant any benefits Claimant was otherwise entitled to and missed as a result of the erroneous noncooperation sanction.



Robert J. Chavez
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: July 12, 2012

Date Mailed: July 12, 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

RJC/pf

cc:

