

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No: 201243593
Issue No: 1038
Case No: 101606584
Hearing Date: [REDACTED]
Saginaw County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Kevin Scully

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge by authority of MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37. Claimant's request for a hearing was received on March 29, 2012. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on Thursday, May 3, 2012.

ISSUE

Whether the Department of Human Services (Department) properly sanctioned the Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case for noncompliance with the Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) program?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. The Claimant was an ongoing Family Independence Program (FIP) until May 1, 2012.
2. The Department referred the Claimant to the Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) program as a condition of receiving FIP benefits.
3. The Claimant was found to be noncompliant with the JET program on March 2, 2012, when a review of her assignment logs revealed that she had not completed her JET assignment for the month of February.
4. The Claimant completed 93 hours of JET activity in February of 2012, but had been assigned 150 hours of JET activity.
5. The Department conducted a triage meeting on March 20, 2012.

6. On March 21, 2012, the Department notified the Claimant that it would sanction her FIP benefits as of May 1, 2012.
7. The Department received the Claimant's request for a hearing on March 29, 2012, protesting the sanctioning of her FIP benefits.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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 DHS when the client applies for cash assistance. Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program requirements, education and training opportunities, and assessments will be 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 Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) 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.

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, Item 233A.

Noncompliance, without good cause, with employment requirements for FIP/RAP(SEE BEM 233A) may affect FAP if both programs were active on the date of the FIP noncompliance. BEM 233b. The FAP group member should be disqualified for noncompliance when all the following exist:

- The client was active both FIP and FAP on the date of the FIP noncompliance, and
- The client did not comply with FIP/RAP employment requirements, and
- The client is subject to a penalty on the FIP/RAP program, and

- The client is not deferred from FAP work requirements, and
- The client did not have good cause for the noncompliance. BEM 233B.

The Department should budget the Last FIP grant amount on the FAP budget for the number of months that corresponds with the FIP penalty (either three months for the first two noncompliances or 12 months for the third and subsequent noncompliances) after the FIP case closes for employment and/or self sufficiency-related noncompliance. The Last FIP grant amount is the grant amount the client received immediately before the FIP case closed.

The Claimant was an ongoing Family Independence Program (FIP) recipient until May 1, 2012, and the Department had referred her to the JET program as a condition of receiving FIP benefits. The Claimant was noncompliant with the JET program on March 2, 2012, when a review of her assignment logs revealed that she had not completed her JET assignment for the month of February. The Claimant completed 93 hours of JET activity in February of 2012, but had been assigned 150 hours of JET activity. The Department conducted a triage meeting on March 20, 2012, where the Claimant was given the opportunity to establish good cause for noncompliance with the JET program. The Department did not find good cause. On March 21, 2012, the Department notified the Claimant that it would sanction her FIP benefits as of May 1, 2012.

The Claimant argued that she had good cause for her noncompliance with the JET program. The Claimant testified that a lack of transportation was a barrier to the completion of her JET assignment. The Claimant testified that a portion of the JET programming she was required to participate in took place in an unsafe environment, which was a barrier to the completion of her JET assignment. The Claimant testified that due to illnesses of herself and her family members, she was unable to complete her JET assignment.

The Department's representative testified that it provided the Claimant with assistance to overcome the transportation barriers so that she could complete her JET assignment. The Department's representative testified that bus passes and mileage reimbursement are available to participants of the JET program. In this case, the Claimant did not make use of the bus passes, and did not utilize the mileage reimbursement benefits enough for the Department to issue a check to the Claimant. The Department credited the mileage the Claimant did claim towards future months of participation.

A claim of good cause must be verified and documented. BEM 233A. In this case, the Claimant did provide any evidence that an unsafe condition where JET program was being conducted was a barrier to the completion of her JET assignment. The Department's representative testified that there was no records of the conditions

reported by the Claimant, and that no evidence of this complaint was available during the triage meeting.

The Claimant submitted documentation at the triage meeting that she was not capable of participating in the JET program on February 13, 2012, February 28, 2012, and February 29, 2012, due to her medical condition. This documentation does not establish good cause for the 57 hours of JET activity that the Claimant failed to perform in February of 2012.

The Claimant testified that other documentation was available, but was not taken to the triage meeting. The Claimant submitted additional documentation that verifies other instances where she was not able to participate in the JET program due to her medical condition, or the medical condition of a close family member. The Claimant also provided documentation of a court appointment. The Claimant testified that she would have brought the additional documentation to the triage meeting, but that she did not know the time frame of her alleged noncompliance.

On March 9, 2012, the Department notified the Claimant that a triage meeting would be held on March 20, 2012, where she would be given the opportunity to provide evidence of good cause for her noncompliance. This notice indicates that the Claimant should bring evidence of good cause to the triage meeting, and that she had until March 20, 2012, to present any evidence of good. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant had an adequate opportunity to present evidence of good cause.

Based on the evidence and testimony available during the hearing, the Department's determination that the Claimant did not have good cause for her noncompliance with the JET program is reasonable. The Department has established that it acted properly when it sanctioned the Claimant's FIP benefits for noncompliance with the JET program.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the Department acted in accordance with policy when it sanctioned the Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case for noncompliance with the Jobs, Education, and Training (JET) program.

The Department's FIP sanction is **AFFIRMED**. It is SO ORDERED.

/s/
Kevin Scully
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: May 7, 2012

Date Mailed: May 7, 2012

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 60 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.

KS/tb

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