

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 2012-58185
Issue No.: 1018
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: July 23, 2012
County: Wayne (82-55)

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 telephone hearing was held on July 23, 2012, from Detroit, Michigan. Participants on behalf of claimant included [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Did the Department correctly impose a negative case action and three-month sanction upon claimant for non-compliance with work-related activities?

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 FIP recipient in Wayne County.
2. On March 7, 2012, claimant was referred to triage by Jobs, Education and Training (JET) officials for failing to attend and meet program requirements for the month of February 2012.
3. On March 7, 2012, claimant was sent a DHS-2444, Notice of Non-Compliance.
4. The notice scheduled a triage for March 20, 2012.
5. Claimant did not attend triage.

6. Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case was closed in a response to the missed triage appointment.
7. No determination of good cause was made.
8. Claimant's case was sanctioned and closed on May 1, 2012.
9. This is claimant's first alleged incident of noncompliance.
10. On June 4, 2012, claimant filed a request for hearing, alleging that he disagreed with the actions of the Department.

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 Mich Admin Code, R 400.3101 through R 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 Mich Admin Code, R 400.3001 through R 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 ACS, R 400.3151 through R 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 Mich Admin Code, R 400.5001 through R 400.5015.

All FIP and Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) eligible adults and 16- and 17-year-olds not in high school full time must be referred to the JET program, or other employment service provider, unless 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 to find employment. BEM 230A, p. 1. A cash recipient who refuses, without good cause, to participate in assigned employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities is subject to penalties. BEM 230A, p. 1. This is commonly called “noncompliance.” BEM 233A defines noncompliance as failing or refusing to, without good cause:

... appear and participate with the Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Program or other employment service provider...” BEM 233A p. 1.

However, a failure to participate can be overcome if the client has good cause. Good cause is a valid reason for failing to participate with employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities that are based on factors that are beyond the control of the claimant. BEM 233A. The penalty for noncompliance is FIP closure. However, for the first occurrence of noncompliance on the FIP case, the client can be excused. BEM 233A.

Furthermore, JET participants cannot be terminated from a JET program without first scheduling a “triage” meeting with the client to jointly discuss noncompliance and good cause. If a client calls to reschedule, a phone triage should be attempted to be held immediately, if at all possible. If it is not possible, the triage should be rescheduled as quickly as possible within the negative action period. At these triage meetings, good cause is determined based on the best information available during the triage and prior to the negative action date. **Good cause must be considered, even if the client does not attend.** BEM 233A.

If the client establishes good cause within the negative action period, penalties are not imposed. The client is sent back to JET, if applicable, after resolving transportation, CDC, or other factors which may have contributed to the good cause. BEM 233A.

In the current case, the Department’s procedures towards overcoming claimant’s non-participation were inadequate. While there may have been questions as to whether the claimant could have attended the triage, or whether the claimant even had good cause, or whether the claimant was noncompliant, these questions are, ultimately, irrelevant.

The only relevant fact is that BEM 233A requires the Department to hold a triage and make a good cause determination, even if the claimant does not show up for the triage. The Department has presented no evidence that a good cause determination was ever made. Department Exhibit 1, the Hearing Summary, states that claimant did not attend the triage as the reason for sanction. The Department testified that claimant's case was closed because he failed to attend the triage. No mention of an independent good cause determination is made. Therefore, as no independent evidence has been offered to show that a good cause determination was made beyond noting that claimant did not show up for the triage, and that all evidence in the file shows that the reason for the noncompliance assessment was because claimant did not show up for the triage, the undersigned must hold that the Department did not make an individual assessment. This is plain error.

The Department is required to hold the triage without the client and discuss and consider all factors that are known about the client that may have contributed to good cause. A good cause determination must then be made using these known factors. BEM 233A, p. 7. The available evidence shows that this determination was not made, thus placing the Department in error.

This Administrative Law Judge must, therefore, conclude that the Department was in error in its triage and post-triage procedures, and that claimant's case should never have closed.

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 it .
 did not act properly when finding claimant noncompliant with work-related activities.

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

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

1. The Department is ORDERED to reschedule a triage for claimant and reopen claimant's case retroactive to the date of case closure.

2. The Department is further ORDERED to institute any appropriate triage and post-triage procedures, including a good cause determination and a consideration of whether claimant was non-participatory in the first place, as is consistent with the Bridges Eligibility and Bridges Administrative Manuals for a first incident of noncompliance.



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

Date Signed: July 25, 2012

Date Mailed: July 25, 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.

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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:

