

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 2013-15877
Issue No.: 3055
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: June 6, 2013
County: Manistee

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Vicki L. Armstrong

HEARING DECISION FOR INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon the Department of Human Services' (Department) request for a hearing. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on June 6, 2013, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by Resident Agent [REDACTED] [REDACTED] of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Respondent did not appear at the hearing and it was held in Respondent's absence pursuant to 7 CFR 273.16(e), Mich Admin Code R 400.3130(5), or Mich Admin Code R 400.3178(5).

ISSUES

1. Did Respondent receive an overissuance (OI) of Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits that the Department is entitled to recoup?
2. Did Respondent commit an Intentional Program Violation (IPV)?
3. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving Food Assistance Program (FAP)?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. The Department's OIG filed a hearing request on December 7, 2012, to establish an OI of benefits received by Respondent as a result of Respondent having allegedly committed an IPV.
2. The OIG has requested that Respondent be disqualified from receiving program benefits.
3. The Department's OIG indicates that the time period they are considering the fraud period is June 1, 2010 through March 1, 2011.

4. During the alleged fraud period, Respondent was issued \$ [REDACTED] in FAP benefits from the State of Michigan.
5. Respondent was entitled to \$ [REDACTED] in FAP during this time period.
6. This was Respondent's first IPV.
7. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent at the last known address and was not returned by the US Post Office as undeliverable.

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 1999 AC, Rule 400.3001 through Rule 400.3015.

When a client group receives more benefits than they are entitled to receive, the Department must attempt to recoup the OI. BAM 700.

Suspected IPV means an OI exists for which all three of the following conditions exist:

- The client intentionally failed to report information or intentionally gave incomplete or inaccurate information needed to make a correct benefit determination, and
- The client was clearly and correctly instructed regarding his or her reporting responsibilities, and
- The client has no apparent physical or mental impairment that limits his or her understanding or ability to fulfill their reporting responsibilities.

IPV is suspected when there is clear and convincing evidence that the client has intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing or preventing reduction of program benefits or eligibility. BAM 720.

The Department's OIG requests IPV hearings for cases when:

- benefit overissuances are not forwarded to the prosecutor,
- prosecution of welfare fraud is declined by the prosecutor for a reason other than lack of evidence, and

- the total overissuance amount is \$1000 or more, or
- the total overissuance amount is less than \$1000, and
 - the group has a previous intentional program violation, or
 - the alleged IPV involves FAP trafficking, or
 - the alleged fraud involves concurrent receipt of assistance,
 - the alleged fraud is committed by a state/government employee.

A court or hearing decision that finds a client committed an IPV disqualifies that client from receiving certain program benefits. A disqualified recipient remains a member of an active group as long as he lives with them. Other eligible group members may continue to receive benefits. BAM 720.

Clients who commit an IPV are disqualified for a standard disqualification period except when a court orders a different period, or except when the overissuance relates to MA. Refusal to repay will not cause denial of current or future MA if the client is otherwise eligible. BAM 710. Clients are disqualified for periods of one year for the first IPV, two years for the second IPV, lifetime disqualification for the third IPV, and ten years for a concurrent receipt of benefits. BAM 720.

In this case the department alleges Respondent trafficked her FAP benefits because the store at which she used \$[REDACTED] dollars of her benefits was permanently disqualified from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP). The store is minimally stocked with dairy products, fruits/vegetables, breads and cereals, and meat, poultry, and fish. The store stock is typical of convenience stores and includes prepackaged convenience foods and snacks in addition to canned foods. The OIG investigation revealed that it is suspicious/unlikely that anyone would spend more than \$30 in the store. There is limited counter space, no optical scanners and no carts. Additionally, multiple DHS clients confessed that they trafficked their FAP benefits at this same store and that Respondent's completed transactions were clearly indicative of trafficking as identified in the investigative report.

According to departmental policy, the documentation used to establish the trafficking determination can be circumstantial, such as an affidavit from a store owner or sworn testimony from a federal or state investigator of how much a client could have reasonably trafficked in that store. BAM 720, p 7 (2/1/13).

Based on departmental policy, expenditures over \$30 at the store are evidence of FAP trafficking by Claimant.

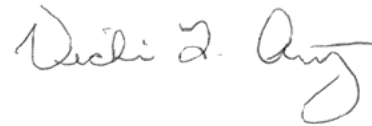
DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, finds that:

1. Respondent did commit an IPV.
2. Respondent did receive an OI of FAP program benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED]

The Department is ORDERED to initiate recoupment procedures for the amount of \$ [REDACTED] in accordance with Department policy.

It is FURTHER ORDERED that Respondent be disqualified from FAP for a period of 12 months.



Vicki L. Armstrong
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: June 17, 2013

Date Mailed: June 18, 2013

NOTICE: The law provides that within 30 days of receipt of the above Decision and Order, the Respondent may appeal it to the circuit court for the county in which he/she lives.

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