

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2013-1704
Issue No: 3008
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: February 21, 2013
Ingham County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: COREY A. ARENDT

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 21, 2013 from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included Ebony Terry. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ISSUE

Whether the Department properly denied the Claimant's application for Child Developmental and Care (CDC) benefits due to noncooperation with child support?

FINDINGS OF FACT

I find as material fact, based upon the competent, material and substantial evidence on the whole record:

1. Between November 4, 2011 and April 12, 2012, the Office of Child Support mailed the Claimant various contact and noncooperation letters. The letters were all sent to an incorrect address.
2. On March 29, 2012, the Office of Child Support placed the Claimant into noncooperation status unbeknownst to the Claimant.
3. On August 13, 2012, the Claimant applied for CDC benefits.
4. On August 15, 2012, the Department sent the Claimant a verification checklist. The checklist indicated the Claimant was to contact the Office of Child Support to comply with Child Support requirements. The checklist did not indicate anything about being in noncooperation status.
5. On September 13, 2012, the Department sent the Claimant a notice of case action. The notice indicated the Claimant's CDC application was being denied due to the Claimant's noncooperation status with the Office of Child Support.

6. On September 18, 2012, the Claimant requested a hearing to protest the CDC application denial.
7. At some point in time between approximately August 15, 2012 and September 27, 2012, the Claimant was able to communicate with the Office of Child Support. During this time, the Claimant resolved all of the pending issues regarding the noncompliance.
8. On September 27, 2012, the Office of Child Support placed the Claimant in cooperation status.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The regulations governing the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are found in the Michigan Administrative Code, MAC R 400.901-400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because his claim for assistance is denied. MAC R 400.903(1).

Clients have the right to contest a department decision affecting eligibility or benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. BAM 600. The department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness. BAM 600.

Families are strengthened when children's needs are met. Parents have a responsibility to meet their children's needs by providing support and/or cooperating with the department including the Office of Child Support (OCS), the Friend of the Court and the prosecuting attorney to establish paternity and/or obtain support from an absent parent. BEM 255, p. 1.

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.

Absent parents are required to support their children. Support includes all the following:

- . Child support
- . Medical support
- . Payment for medical care from any third party.

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.

Exceptions to the cooperation requirement are allowed for all child support actions except failure to return court-ordered support payments received after the payment effective date. Grant good cause only if:

- . requiring cooperation/support action is against the child's best interests, and
- . there is a specific "good cause" reason.

If good cause exists, cooperation is excused as an eligibility requirement for the child involved. It can still be required for another child in the same family. BEM 255, pp. 1-2.

Cooperation is a condition of eligibility. The following persons in the eligible group are required to cooperate in establishing paternity and obtaining support, unless good cause has been granted or is pending.

- . Grantee and spouse.
- . Specified relative/person acting as a parent and spouse.
- . Parent of the child for whom paternity and/or support action is required.

Cooperation is required in all phases of the process to establish paternity and obtain support and includes all of the following:

- . Contacting the SS when requested.
- . Providing all known information about the absent parent.
- . Appearing at the office of the prosecuting attorney when requested.
- . Taking any actions needed to establish paternity and obtain child support (e.g., testifying at hearings or obtaining blood tests).

In this matter, the Department presented some evidence to indicate the Claimant was possibly noncompliant with the Office of Child Support. However, this evidence also shows that the Claimant was never properly notified of the noncompliant status until approximately the time the Department denied the Claimant's application. I find it hard to find the Claimant was actually noncompliant if at no point in time anyone actually contacted the Claimant. The Claimant testified she has been honest and truthful to all parties throughout this ordeal and had she been contacted by the Office of Child Support she would have provided any and all information being requested. Because of this, I find the Claimant at no point in time was actually noncompliant with the Office of Child Support.

Based on the evidence presented at the hearing, I find that the Department improperly denied the Claimant's CDC benefits for failure to comply with child support.

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 not act properly.

Accordingly, the Department's CDC decision is **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. Initiate a redetermination as to the Claimant's eligibility for CDC benefits beginning August 13, 2012 and issue retroactive benefits if otherwise eligible and qualified.

/s/

Corey A. Arendt
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: February 22, 2013

Date Mailed: February 22, 2013

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 90 days of the filing of the original request.

The Claimant may appeal the Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the mailing 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.

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