

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 201321316  
Issue No.: 1038  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: February 19, 2013  
County: Wayne DHS (18)

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Christian Gardocki

**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 19, 2013 from Detroit, Michigan. Participants included the above-named claimant. [REDACTED] testified on behalf of Claimant. Participants on behalf of Department of Human Services (DHS) included [REDACTED], Specialist and [REDACTED], JET Coordinator.

**ISSUE**

The issue is whether DHS properly terminated Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefit eligibility due to Claimant's noncompliance with Work Participation Program (WPP) participation.

**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 ongoing FIP benefit recipient.
2. Claimant was not an ongoing WPP participant.
3. On 10/1/12, DHS mailed Claimant a Work Participation Program Appointment Notice to attend WPP on 10/15/12.
4. Claimant failed to attend WPP on 10/15/12.

5. On 10/25/12, DHS imposed an employment-related disqualification against Claimant and mailed Claimant a Notice of Noncompliance scheduling Claimant for a triage meeting to be held on 11/1/12.
6. On 10/25/12, DHS mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action initiating termination of Claimant's FIP benefit eligibility, effective 12/2012, due to noncompliance with WPP participation.
7. Claimant failed to attend the triage.
8. Claimant failed to receive the orientation and triage notices.
9. DHS determined that Claimant had no good cause for her failure to attend WPP.
10. On 1/4/13, Claimant requested a hearing disputing the FIP benefit termination.

### **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.* DHS administers the FIP pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq* and MAC R 400.3101-3131. DHS policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

Federal and state laws require each work eligible individual (WEI) in the FIP group to participate in the work participation program or other employment-related activity unless temporarily deferred or engaged in activities that meet participation requirements. BEM 230A (11/2012), p. 1. These clients must participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities to increase their employability and obtain employment. *Id.*

As a condition of eligibility, all WEIs and non-WEIs must work or engage in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities. Noncompliance of applicants, recipients, or member adds means doing any of the following without good cause:

- Appear and participate with the work participation program or other employment service provider.
- Complete a Family Automated Screening Tool (FAST), as assigned as the first step in the Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP) process.
- Develop a FSSP.
- Comply with activities assigned on the 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.
- Participate in required activity.
- 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 (11/2012), p. 1-2

A Work Eligible Individual (WEI) and non-WEIs (except ineligible grantees, clients deferred for lack of child care, and disqualified aliens), who fail, without good cause, to participate in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, must be penalized. *Id.* Depending on the case situation, penalties include the following: delay in eligibility at application, ineligibility (denial or termination of FIP with no minimum penalty period), case closure for a minimum period depending on the number of previous non-compliance penalties. *Id.*

The present case involves a FIP benefit termination, effective 1/2013, based on an employment disqualification imposed against Claimant. It was not disputed that DHS mailed Claimant a Work Participation Program Appointment Notice, informing Claimant of an obligation to attend WPP on 10/15/12. It was not disputed that Claimant failed to attend the WPP orientation.

WEIs will not be terminated from a WPP program without first scheduling a triage meeting with the client to jointly discuss noncompliance and good cause. *Id.*, p. 7. In processing a FIP closure, DHS is required to send the client a notice of non-compliance (DHS-2444) which must include: the date of the non-compliance, the reason the client was determined to be non-compliant and the penalty duration. *Id.*, p. 8. In addition, a triage must be held within the negative action period. *Id.* If good cause is asserted, a decision concerning good cause is made during the triage and prior to the negative action effective date. *Id.*

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. *Id.*, p 3. Good cause includes any of the following: employment for 40 hours/week, physically or mentally unfit, illness or injury, reasonable accommodation, no child care, no transportation, illegal activities, discrimination, unplanned event or factor, long commute or eligibility for an extended FIP period. *Id.*, p. 4. A claim of good cause must be verified. *Id.*, p. 3.

It was not disputed that Claimant also failed to attend a triage meeting to discuss good cause for her failure to attend WPP. Claimant contended that she did not attend the WPP orientation or triage because she did not receive either of the notices to attend.

The proper mailing and addressing of a letter creates a presumption of receipt. That presumption may be rebutted by evidence. *Stacey v Sankovich*, 19 Mich App 638

(1969); *Good v Detroit Automobile Inter-Insurance Exchange*, 67 Mich App 270 (1976). Claimant testified that she lived in the basement of a residence which she shared with a landlord. Claimant testified that she shared a locked community mailbox with her landlord and that she relied on her landlord to give her any mail. Claimant also testified that during the time that DHS referred her to WPP, she was fighting with her landlord and that she suspects that her landlord purposely kept Claimant's mail. A witness with knowledge of Claimant's disputes with her landlord also testified on behalf of Claimant

Claimant presented no documentary verification of her testimony. Nevertheless, there was evidence which tended to corroborate Claimant's testimony.

Claimant requested a hearing disputing the benefit termination on a generic Request for Hearing form rather than the form mailed with the benefit termination notice. If Claimant's landlord kept all of Claimant's mail, as Claimant testified, then Claimant would not have received a benefit termination notice. Thus, Claimant's Request for Hearing form choice is consistent with her testimony.

Claimant requested a hearing on 1/4/13 for a termination of FIP benefits, effective 12/2012. If Claimant's landlord kept Claimant's mail, Claimant would not have been aware of a benefit termination until after she checked the availability of her FIP benefits. A hearing request occurring long after an effective date is consistent with not receiving notice of the benefit termination which is consistent with not receiving other mail.

It was also established that Claimant reported a change in residence since DHS mailed the notices of WPP orientation and triage. A change in address is evidence of a dispute with a previous landlord.

Overall, Claimant's testimony that she did not receive a notice to attend WPP or a notice of triage was credible and sufficiently verified. The failure to receive notices is found to be good cause. Accordingly, the FIP benefit termination is found to be improper.

### **DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds that DHS improperly terminated Claimant's FIP benefit eligibility. It is ordered that DHS initiate:

- (1) redetermination of Claimant's FIP benefit eligibility, effective 12/2012, subject to the finding that Claimant established good cause for her failure to attend WPP;
- (2) processing of a supplement for any benefits lost as a result of the improper finding of noncompliance; and
- (3) removal of any relevant disqualification from Claimant's disqualification history.

The actions taken by DHS are REVERSED.



Christian Gardocki  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 2/28/2013

Date Mailed: 2/28/2013

**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

CG/hw

cc:

