

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2013-29609
Issue No.: 3055
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: May 22, 2013
County: Macomb-36

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 May 22, 2013, at which Respondent did not appear. The Department was represented by Resident Agent [REDACTED] [REDACTED] of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). This matter having been initiated by the department and due notice having been provided to Respondent, the hearing was held in Respondent's absence in accordance with Bridges Administrative Manual, Item 725.

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 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 2/21/13 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. Respondent was a recipient of FAP during the period of October 1, 2007, through January 31, 2009.

4. Respondent was aware of the responsibility to report all household members and all household income.
5. Respondent had no apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement.
6. The Department's OIG indicates that the time period they are considering the fraud period is October 1, 2007, through January 31, 2009.
7. During the alleged fraud period, Respondent was issued \$ [REDACTED] in FAP benefits from the State of Michigan.
8. Respondent was entitled to \$0 in FAP during this time period.
9. Respondent did receive an OI in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] under the FAP program.
10. This was Respondent's first IPV.

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 that Respondent self-reported that she had been trafficking her FAP benefits. On the department's exhibit #45, there is a handwritten letter which states, "I have managed to get by by doing something illegal – exchanging the food stamps for cash with relatives just to pay the rent." The letter is signed by Claimant and dated August, 2008.

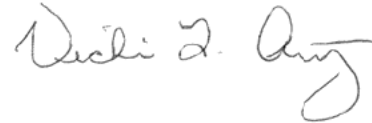
A second letter, (see department's exhibit #66- 67), indicates that she receives \$ [REDACTED] in cash benefits when the rest is \$ [REDACTED] and she makes up the shortage of \$ [REDACTED] by trading the food stamps for cash. The letter is dated March 9, 2009, and is signed by Respondent.

Respondent failed to appear for the hearing. The standard for an Intentional Program Violation is clear and convincing evidence. Based on the two letters and the date of the letters, the evidence is clear and convincing that she trafficked some amount of FAP benefits in August 2008 and March, 2009. However, the amount trafficked is unknown. As a result, the department did not provide clear and convincing evidence of an IPV or overissuance.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, concludes that the department failed to establish an overissuance or Intentional Program Violations. Therefore, the department's IPV action cannot be upheld.

It is SO ORDERED.



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

Date Signed: June 10, 2013

Date Mailed: June 10, 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.

VLA/las

cc:

