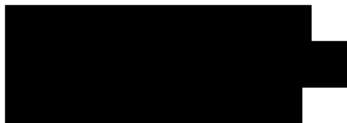


STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM  
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF:



Registration No: 201331934  
Issue No: 3055  
Case No: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: April 25, 2013  
County: Saginaw County DHS

**Administrative Law Judge:** Suzanne D. Sonneborn

**HEARING DECISION**

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge in accordance with 7 CFR 273.16, MCL 400.9, MCL 400.37, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3130, on the Department of Human Services' (the Department's) request for hearing. After due notice, a hearing was held on April 25, 2013, at which Respondent failed to appear. The hearing was held in Respondent's absence in accordance with Department of Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 720, pp 9-10. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], a regulation agent with the department's Office of Inspector General (OIG).

**ISSUE**

Whether Respondent committed an intentional program violation (IPV) involving the Food Assistance Program (FAP) and whether Respondent received an over issuance of FAP benefits that the Department is entitled to recoup?

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

Based on the clear and convincing evidence pertaining to the whole record, the Administrative Law Judge finds as material fact:

1. The Department's OIG filed a request for hearing to establish an over issuance of FAP benefits received as a result of a determination that Respondent committed a first IPV in this program. The agency further requested that Respondent be disqualified from receiving further FAP benefits for a period of one year.
2. On May 4, 2010 and January 4, 2011, Respondent signed two assistance applications (DHS-1171). In doing so, Respondent certified with her signature, under penalty of perjury, that the applications had been examined by or read to her and, to the best of her knowledge, the facts were true and complete. Respondent further certified with her signature

on the applications that she received a copy, reviewed, and agreed with the sections in the assistance application Information Booklet, which include the obligation to report changes in one's circumstances within ten days. Respondent further certified with her signature that she understood she could be prosecuted for perjury and for fraud and/or be required to repay the amount wrongfully received if she intentionally gave false or misleading information, misrepresented, hid or withheld facts that may cause her to receive assistance she should not have received. (Department Exhibit 1, pp. 14-29; Department Exhibit 2, pp. 30-49)

3. On January 15, 2013, the department obtained verification that Respondent was incarcerated during the periods January 11, 2010 through January 3, 2011 and April 25, 2012 through November 3, 2012. (Department Exhibit 3, pp. 50-51)
4. During the periods January 17, 2010 through January 3, 2011 and June 3, 2012 through August 5, 2012, during which time Respondent was incarcerated, purchases continued to be made with her issued Michigan Bridge card in the state of Michigan. (Department Exhibit 5, pp. 55-63)
5. As a result of Respondent's refusal or failure to properly report a change in her group composition due to her incarceration, she received an over issuance of FAP benefits in the amount of \$1,582.00 during the period March 1, 2010 through November 30, 2010 and an over issuance of FAP benefits in the amount of \$1,000.00 during the period June 1, 2012 through October 31, 2012, for a total FAP over issuance of \$2,582.00. (Department Exhibit 4, pp. 52-54)
6. Respondent was clearly instructed and fully aware, or should have been fully aware, of her responsibility to report all changes in circumstances, including her change in group composition due to her incarceration, to the Department within ten days of the occurrence, as required by agency policy.
7. There was no apparent physical or mental impairment present that limited Respondent's ability to understand and comply with her reporting responsibilities.
8. This was the first determined IPV committed by Respondent involving the FAP program.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The FAP – formerly known as the Food Stamp Program – was established by the Food Stamp Act of 1977, 7 USC 2011, *et seq.*, as amended, and is implemented through federal regulations found in 7 CFR 273.1 *et seq.* The Department administers the FAP under MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3001 through R 400.3015. Agency policies pertaining to the FAP are found in the BAM, Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), and Reference Tables Manual (RFT). The goal of the FAP is to ensure sound nutrition among children and adults. BEM 230A.

In the present matter, the Department requested a hearing to establish an over issuance of FAP benefits, claiming that the over issuance was a result of an IPV committed by Respondent. Further, the Department asked that Respondent be disqualified from the FAP for a period of one year.

Generally, a client is responsible for reporting any change in circumstances that may affect FAP eligibility or benefit level, including a change in group composition, within ten days of the change. BAM 105, p. 7; BEM 220, p 1.

When a client or group receives more benefits than they are entitled to receive, the Department must attempt to recoup the overissuance. BAM 700, p 1. A suspected IPV is defined as an overissuance where:

- 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. [BAM 720, p 1.]

An IPV is suspected by the Department when a client intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing, or preventing a reduction of, program eligibility or benefits. BAM 720, p 1. In bringing an IPV action, the agency carries the burden of establishing the violation with clear and convincing evidence. BAM 720, p 1.

An overissuance period begins the first month the benefit issuance exceeds the amount allowed by Department policy or six years before the date the overissuance was referred to an agency recoupment specialist, whichever is later. This period ends on the month before the benefit is corrected. BAM 720, p 6. The amount of overissuance

is the benefit amount the client actually received minus the amount the client was eligible to receive. BAM 720, p 6.

Suspected IPV matters are investigated by the OIG. This office: refers suspected IPV cases that meet criteria for prosecution to the appropriate prosecuting attorney; refers suspected IPV cases that meet criteria for IPV administrative hearings to the Michigan Administrative Hearings System (MAHS); and returns non-IPV cases back to the Department's recoupment specialist. BAM 720, p 9.

The OIG will request an IPV hearing when:

- Benefit overissuances are not forwarded to the prosecuting attorney's office;
- Prosecution of the matter is declined by the prosecuting attorney's office for a reason other than lack of evidence, and
- The total OI amount for the FAP is \$1000 or more, or
- The total OI amount is less than \$1000, and
  - The group has a previous IPV, or
  - The alleged IPV involves FAP trafficking, or
  - The alleged fraud involves concurrent receipt of assistance or
  - The alleged fraud is committed by a state/government employee. BAM 720, p 10.

The OIG represents the Department during the hearing process in IPV matters. BAM 720, p 9. When a client is determined to have committed an IPV, the following standard periods of disqualification from the program are applied (unless a court orders a different length of time): one year for the first IPV; two years for the second IPV; and lifetime for the third IPV. BAM 720, p 13. Further, IPV's involving the FAP result in a ten-year disqualification for concurrent receipt of benefits (i.e., receipt of benefits in more than one State at the same time). BAM 720, p 13.

A disqualified client remains a member of an active benefit group, as long as he or she continues to live with the other group members – those members may continue to receive benefits. BAM 720, p 12.

In this case, at the April 25, 2013 disqualification hearing, the OIG provided credible, undisputed, and sufficient testimony and other evidence establishing that, on May 4, 2010 and January 4, 2011, Respondent signed two assistance applications (DHS-1171). In doing so, Respondent certified with her signature, under penalty of perjury, that the applications had been examined by or read to her and, to the best of her knowledge, the facts were true and complete. Respondent further certified with her

signature on the applications that she received a copy, reviewed, and agreed with the sections in the assistance application Information Booklet, which include the obligation to report changes in one's circumstances within ten days. Respondent further certified with her signature that she understood she could be prosecuted for perjury and for fraud and/or be required to repay the amount wrongfully received if she intentionally gave false or misleading information, misrepresented, hid or withheld facts that may cause her to receive assistance she should not have received.

The OIG further established that Respondent was incarcerated during the periods January 11, 2010 through January 3, 2011 and April 25, 2012 through November 3, 2012. The OIG further established that, during the periods January 17, 2010 through January 3, 2011 and June 3, 2012 through August 5, 2012, during which time Respondent was incarcerated, purchases continued to be made with her issued Michigan Bridge card in the state of Michigan. Finally, the OIG established that, as a result of Respondent's refusal or failure to properly report that she was no longer a Michigan resident, she received an over issuance of FAP benefits in the amount of \$1,582.00 during the period March 1, 2010 through November 30, 2010 and an over issuance of FAP benefits in the amount of \$1,000.00 during the period June 1, 2012 through October 31, 2012, for a total FAP over issuance of \$2,582.00.

Testimony and other evidence must be weighed and considered according to its reasonableness. *Gardiner v Courtright*, 165 Mich 54, 62; 130 NW 322 (1911); *Dep't of Community Health v Risch*, 274 Mich App 365, 372; 733 NW2d 403 (2007). Moreover, the weight and credibility of this evidence is generally for the fact-finder to determine. *Dep't of Community Health*, 274 Mich App at 372; *People v Terry*, 224 Mich App 447, 452; 569 NW2d 641 (1997).

Respondent was, or should have been, fully aware of her responsibility to timely report a change in her group composition due to her incarceration. Moreover, Respondent's signature on her assistance applications established that she was, or should have been, fully aware that the intentional withholding or misrepresentation of information potentially affecting her eligibility or benefit level could result in criminal, civil, or administrative action. Finally, there was no evidence presented indicating that Respondent suffered from any physical or mental impairment that limited her ability to understand and fulfill her reporting responsibilities. See BEM 720, p 1.

Based on the credible and undisputed testimony and other evidence presented by the OIG, the Administrative Law Judge finds that the OIG established, under the clear and convincing standard, that Respondent committed an IPV in this matter, resulting in an an over issuance of FAP benefits in the amount of \$1,582.00 during the period March 1, 2010 through November 30, 2010 and an over issuance of FAP benefits in the amount of \$1,000.00 during the period June 1, 2012 through October 31, 2012, for a total FAP over issuance of \$2,582.00. Further, because this was Respondent's first IPV, the one-year disqualification period from the FAP program is appropriate.

**DECISION AND ORDER**

Based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, this Administrative Law Judge decides that Respondent committed an intentional program violation by refusing or failing to report a change in state residency.

It is therefore ORDERED THAT:

- Respondent shall reimburse the Department for the FAP benefits ineligibly received as a result of her intentional program violation in the amount of \$2,582.00; and
- Respondent is personally disqualified from participation in the FAP for a period of one year. The disqualification period will begin to run IMMEDIATELY as of the date of this order.

/s/

Suzanne D. Sonneborn  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: April 26, 2013

Date Mailed: April 26, 2013

**NOTICE:** Respondent may appeal this decision and order to the circuit court for the county in which she resides within 30 days of receipt of this decision and order.

SDS/aca

cc:

