

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 201342628
Issue No: 3008, 4003
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: May 29, 2013
Genesee County DHS (06)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Suzanne D. Sonneborn

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon Claimant's authorized representative's request for a hearing received by the Department of Human Services (department) on April 11, 2013. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on May 29, 2013. Claimant appeared and provided testimony. The department was represented by [REDACTED], an eligibility specialist with the department's Genesee County branch office.

ISSUE

Whether the department properly denied Claimant's application for State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits and Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits for failure to return the required verifications?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. On March 1, 2013, Claimant applied for SDA and FAP benefits for herself. (Department Exhibit 1)
2. On March 4, 2013, the department mailed Claimant a Verification Checklist (DHS 3503), requesting verification of self-employment by Claimant's son, [REDACTED]. The department also requested verification of Claimant's home and residential address. The department also requested verification of Claimant's disability by requesting that Claimant complete the enclosed Medical Examination Report (DHS-49), Psychiatric/Psychological Examination Report (DHS-49-D), Medical-Social Questionnaire (DHS-49-F), and Activities of Daily Living

(DHS-49-G). This information was due to the department by March 14, 2013. (Department Exhibit 2)

3. Claimant did not provide the department with all requested verifications by the March 14, 2013 deadline.
4. On March 29, 2013, the department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action (DHS 1605) advising Claimant that her application for SDA and FAP benefits had been denied due to her failure to provide the requested verification information. (Department Exhibit 3)
5. On April 10, 2013, Claimant submitted a hearing request protesting the department's denial of her application for SDA and FAP benefits. (Request for Hearing)

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Clients have the right to contest a department decision affecting eligibility or benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. The department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness of that decision. Department of Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 600 (2011), p. 1. The regulations governing the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are found in sections 400.901 to 400.951 of the Michigan Administrative Code (Mich Admin Code). An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because his claim for assistance is denied. Mich Admin Code R 400.903(1).

The Food Assistance Program (FAP) was established pursuant to 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 of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the FAP program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MAC R 400.30001-3015. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program was established by 2004 PA 344 and is a financial assistance program for individuals who are not eligible for the Family Independence Program (FIP) and are either disabled or the caretaker of a disabled person. The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MAC R 400.3151-400.3180.

Department policy indicates that clients must cooperate with the local office in determining initial and ongoing eligibility with all programs. BAM 105. This includes completion of the necessary forms. Clients who are able to but refuse to provide necessary information or take a required action are subject to penalties. BAM 105. Clients must take actions within their ability to obtain verifications. BAM 130; BEM 702.

Likewise, DHS local office staff must assist clients who ask for help in completing forms. BAM 130; BEM 702; BAM 105.

Verification is usually required upon application or redetermination and for a reported change affecting eligibility or benefit level. BAM 130. The department must allow a client 10 calendar days (or other time limit specified in policy) to provide the requested verification. BAM 130. If the client is unable to provide the verification despite a reasonable effort, the department must extend the time limit at least once. BAM 130. . For MA, if the client cannot provide the verification despite a reasonable effort, the time limit is extended up to three times. BAM 130. Should the client indicate a refusal to provide a verification or, conversely, if the time period given has elapsed and the client has not made a reasonable effort to provide it, the department may send the client a negative action notice. BAM 130. (Emphasis added).

Department policy further provides that a client is responsible for reporting any change in circumstances that may affect eligibility or benefit level, including a change in household membership, within ten days of the change. BAM 105, p 7.

In the instant case, Claimant is disputing the department's denial of her application for SDA and FAP benefits for failure to timely provide the requested verifications.

At the May 29, 2013 hearing, the department's representative, [REDACTED], testified that the department required verification of Claimant's son's self-employment because Claimant's previous assistance application listed her son, [REDACTED], in her household and Claimant had not subsequently reported that he was no longer in her home. [REDACTED] further testified that the department required verification of Claimant's disability in order to complete a disability determination of Claimant's eligibility for the SDA program. [REDACTED] further testified that Claimant did not contact the department prior to the March 14, 2013 verification deadline and request an extension of that deadline or otherwise indicate that she was having difficulty and required assistance in obtaining the required verifications.

Also at the hearing, Claimant testified that her son no longer resides with her – however, Claimant acknowledged that she had not previously informed the department of his departure from the home within ten days of the change in her household. Claimant further testified that she did timely submit some of the required disability verifications but was unable to timely submit the completed Medical Examination Report (DHS-49) and Psychiatric/Psychological Examination Report (DHS-49-D) because she did not have insurance to see a physician and therefore could not obtain these completed forms.

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).

This Administrative Law Judge has carefully considered and weighed the testimony and other evidence in the record and finds that, based on the competent, material, and substantial evidence presented during the May 29, 2013 hearing, because Claimant did not contact the department prior to the March 14, 2013 verification deadline and request an extension of that deadline or otherwise indicate that she was having difficulty and required assistance in obtaining the required verifications, the department acted in accordance with policy in denying Claimant's March 1, 2013 application for SDA and FAP benefits for failure to timely return the required verifications.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department acted in accordance with policy in denying Claimant's March 1, 2013 application for SDA and FAP benefits for failure to timely return the required verifications. Accordingly, the department's action in this regard is **UPHELD**.

/s/_____

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

Date Signed: May 30, 2013

Date Mailed: May 30, 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.

The Claimant may appeal this 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 errors, or other obvious errors in the hearing decision that affect the substantial rights of Claimant;
 - The failure of the ALJ to address other relevant issues in the hearing decision.

A request for a rehearing or reconsideration must be submitted through the local DHS office or directly to MAHS by mail at:

Michigan Administrative Hearings System
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P.O. Box 30639
Lansing, MI 48909-07322

SDS/aca

cc:

