

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 201316401  
Issue No: 1038  
Case No: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: January 16, 2013  
County: Newaygo

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** C. Adam Purnell

**HEARING DECISION**

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon Claimant's request for a hearing received on December 6, 2012. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on January 16, 2013. Participants on behalf of Claimant included [REDACTED] (Claimant) and [REDACTED] (Claimant's husband). Participants on behalf of Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED] (JET Case Manager) and [REDACTED] (Lead Eligibility Specialist).

**ISSUE**

Whether the Department properly terminated and sanctioned Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits for noncompliance with Work First/Jobs, Education and Training (WF/JET) requirements?

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

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

1. Claimant's husband [REDACTED] was a FIP recipient and a mandatory WF/JET participant.
2. On November 20, 2012, [REDACTED] failed to attend required WF/JET activity.
3. On November 20, 2012, the Department mailed Claimant a Notice of Noncompliance (DHS-2444) because [REDACTED] failed to participate as required in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities. Claimant's Triage appointment was scheduled for November 28, 2012 at 9:00am.

4. On November 28, 2012, Claimant (and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] attended Triage via telephone and stated that he had good cause due to a medical need. The Department found [REDACTED] [REDACTED] did not show good cause.
5. The Department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action (DHS-1605) on November 30, 2012, which closed [REDACTED] [REDACTED] FIP benefits effective December 1, 2012.
6. Claimant submitted a hearing request on December 6, 2012 protesting the closure of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] FIP benefits.

### **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. The department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness. BAM 600.

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. The Department of Human Services (DHS or Department) administers the FIP program pursuant to MCL 400.10, et seq., and MAC R 400.3101-3131. The FIP program replaced the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program effective October 1, 1996. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), Reference Table Manual (RFT), and the Bridges Reference Manual (BRM).

FIP provides financial assistance to families with children. BEM 100. The goal of FIP is to help maintain and strengthen family life for children and the parent(s) or other caretaker(s) with whom they are living, and to help the family attain or retain capability for maximum self support and personal independence. BEM 100. Several nonfinancial and financial eligibility factors must be met for a family to be eligible for FIP. BEM 100.

Department policy states that clients must be made aware that FIP is only temporary assistance designed to meet their family's needs and that they must take personal responsibility to achieve self-sufficiency. BEM 229.

The Jobs, Education and Training (JET) program requirements, education and training opportunities, and assessments are covered by the JET case manager when a mandatory JET participant is referred at application for FIP, when a client's reason for deferral ends, or a member add is requested. BEM 229.

Federal and state laws require each work eligible individual (WEI) in the FIP and Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) group to participate in the JET Program or other employment-related activities unless temporarily deferred or engaged in activities that meet participation requirements. BEM 230A. These clients must participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities to increase their employability and obtain stable employment. BEM 230A. WEIs not referred to the work participation program will participate in other activities to overcome barriers so they may eventually be referred to the work participation program or other employment service provider. BEM 230A. A WEI who refuses, without good cause, to participate in assigned employment and/or other self-sufficiency related activities is subject to penalties. BEM 230A.

The work participation program is administered by the Workforce Development Agency, State of Michigan (WDASOM) through the Michigan one-stop service centers. BEM 230A. The work participation program serves employers and job seekers for employers to have skilled workers and job seekers to obtain jobs that provide economic self-sufficiency. BEM 230A.

Certain clients have particular circumstances which may make their participation in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities problematic. BEM 230A. Unless otherwise deferred, they must be referred to the work participation program. BEM 230A. A number of FIP clients have disabilities or live with a spouse or child(ren) with disabilities that may need accommodations to participate in assigned activities. BEM 230A. The needs of persons with disabilities are highly individual and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. BEM 230A. DHS must make reasonable efforts to ensure that persons with disability-related needs or limitations will have an effective and meaningful opportunity to benefit from DHS programs and services to the same extent as persons without disabilities. BEM 230A. Efforts to accommodate persons with disabilities may include modifications to program requirements, or extra help, as explained below. BEM 230A. Failure to recognize and accommodate disabilities undermines efforts to assist families in achieving self-sufficiency. BEM 230A.

A disability that requires reasonable accommodation must be verified by an appropriate source, such as a doctor, psychologist, therapist, educator, etc. A client may disclose a disability at any time. Failure to disclose at an earlier time does not prevent the client from claiming a disability or requesting an accommodation in the future. BEM 230A.

Clients are required to engage in self-sufficiency and family strengthening activities even if they are deferred from work participation program or work activities and may be subject to penalties if they do not participate as required. BEM 230A.

Modifications or extra help may include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) reduced hours of required participation; (2) extended education allowances including more than 12 months allowed for vocational education; or (3) extended job search/job readiness time limit. BEM 230A.

When clients with verified disabilities are fully participating to their capability, they are counted as fully engaged in meeting work participation requirements regardless of the hours in which they are engaged, even if they do not meet federal work requirements. BEM 230A.

All WEIs, unless temporarily deferred, must engage in employment that pays at least state minimum wage or participate in employment services. BEM 230A. WEIs who are temporarily deferred are required to participate in activities that will help them overcome barriers and prepare them for employment or referral to an employment service provider. BEM 230A. **If the WEI refuses or fails to provide verification of a deferral when required, the Department will refer him or her to the work participation program. BEM 230A. The Department must notify the work participation program service provider immediately by phone or email when a client who was previously referred is granted a temporary deferral. BEM 230A.**

A person with short-term incapacity may be deferred for up to 3 (three) months. BEM 230A. A person with a short-term incapacity is a person with a mental or physical illness, limitation, or incapacity expected to last less than 3 (three) months which prevents participation. BEM 230A. **The Department will verify the short-term incapacity and the length of the incapacity using a DHS-54A, Medical Needs, or DHS-54E, Medical Needs - Work Participation Program, or other written statement from an M.D./D.O. BEM 230A.** Then, the Department shall set the medical review date accordingly, but not to exceed three months. BEM 230A. BEM 230A specifically prohibits the Department from advising with a short-term incapacity to apply for SSI. BEM 230A.

The Department must serve individuals who are determined work ready or work ready with limitations by the Medical Review Team when the individual cannot be served by the work participation program. BEM 230A. These clients have a mandatory participation status in Bridges. BEM 230A. The Department must assign self-sufficiency activities up to the medically permissible limit of the individual. BEM 230A. The Department should ask the work participation program to provide any test results or other documentation about the client's limitations at the time the client is referred back to DHS. BEM 230A.

When a client is determined by MRT to be work ready with limitations becomes noncompliant with the work participation program or his/her assigned activities, the Department shall follow the same instructions outlined in BEM 233A with regard to noncompliance.

An applicant, recipient or a member add is noncompliant if he or she, without good cause, fails or refuses to do any of the following: (1) appear and participate with the JET Program or other employment service provider; (2) complete a Family Automated Screening Tool (FAST), as assigned as the first step in the Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP) process; (3) develop a FSSP or a Personal Responsibility Plan and Family Contract (PRPFC); (4) comply with activities assigned to on the FSSP; (5) provide

legitimate documentation of work participation; (6) appear for a scheduled appointment or meeting related to assigned activities; (7) participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities; (8) accept a job referral; (9) complete a job application; (10) appear for a job interview.<sup>1</sup> BEM 233A.

Noncompliance also can be found if an applicant, recipient or a member add, without good cause, does any of the following: (1) states orally or in writing a definite intent not to comply with program requirements; (2) threatens, physically abuses or otherwise behaves disruptively toward anyone conducting or participating in an employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activity; or (3) refuses employment support services if the refusal prevents participation in an employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activity. BEM 233A.

JET participants will not be terminated from a JET program without first scheduling a “triage” meeting with the client to jointly discuss noncompliance and good cause. BEM 233A. The department coordinates the process to notify the MWA case manager of triage meetings including scheduling guidelines. BEM 233A. Clients can either attend a meeting or participate in a conference call if attendance at the triage meeting is not possible. BEM 233A. If a client calls to reschedule an already scheduled triage meeting, the client is offered a telephone conference at that time. BEM 233A. Clients must comply with triage requirement within the negative action period. BEM 233A.

The department is required to send a DHS-2444, Notice of Employment and/or Self-Sufficiency Related Noncompliance within three days after learning of the noncompliance which must include the date of noncompliance, the reason the client was determined to be noncompliant, the penalty that will be imposed and the triage date within the negative action period. BEM 233A.

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. A claim of good cause must be verified and documented for member adds and recipients. If it is determined at triage that the client has good cause, and good cause issues have been resolved, the client should be sent back to JET. BEM 233A. Good cause should be determined based on the best information available during the triage and prior to the negative action date. Good cause may be verified by information already on file with DHS or MWA. Good cause must be considered even if the client does not attend, with particular attention to possible disabilities (including disabilities that have not been diagnosed or identified by the client) and unmet needs for accommodation. BEM 233A.

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<sup>1</sup> The Department will not apply the three month, six month or lifetime penalty to ineligible caretakers, clients deferred for lack of child care and disqualified aliens. Failure to complete a FAST or FSSP results in closure due to failure to provide requested verification. Clients can reapply at any time. BEM 233A.

A client may show good cause if he or she is physically or mentally unfit for the job or activity as shown by medical evidence or other reliable information.<sup>2</sup> BEM 233A.

The penalty for noncompliance without good cause is FIP closure. BEM 233A. Depending on the case situation, penalties include the following: (1) delay in eligibility at application; (2) ineligibility (denial or termination of FIP with no minimum penalty period); (3) case closure for a minimum of three months for the first episode of noncompliance, six months for the second episode of noncompliance and lifetime closure for the third episode of noncompliance. BEM 233A.

The sanction period begins with the first pay period of a month. BEM 233A. Penalties are automatically calculated by the entry of noncompliance without good cause in the Department's computer system known as Bridges. This applies to active FIP cases, including those with a member add who is a WEI work participation program participant. BEM 233A.

Here, Claimant contends that her husband (██████████) had good cause for his failure to attend JET activity on November 20, 2012 because he was physically unfit for activity. Claimant offered a medical note that was signed by a Physician's Assistant. Policy specifically provides that good cause under this circumstance requires a note signed by an M.D., D.O., or Ph.D. A signature from a nurse or physician's assistant is not acceptable. ██████████ testified that he mistakenly permitted his physician's office to allow signature from a Physician's Assistant rather than an M.D. or D.O. The Department did not violate policy in this instance.

Accordingly, this Administrative Law Judge finds that, based on the material and substantial evidence presented during the hearing, Claimant has failed to show good cause for ██████████ failure to complete his mandatory WF/JET attendance and did not provide legitimate medical documentation to excuse his noncompliance. As a result, the Department properly closed Claimant's FIP case for non-compliance.

### **DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, **AFFIRMS-IN-PART** and **REVERSES-IN-PART** the Department's decision in this matter. The Department's decision to close Claimant's FIP case for noncompliance with WF/JET requirements is **AFFIRMED** for the reasons stated above. But the Department's decision to impose a 6 (six) month sanction is **REVERSED** because the Department failed to provide sufficient evidence in the record to prove that Claimant had a previous violation of the JET program. The Notice of Noncompliance is insufficient evidence to establish a prior noncompliance.

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<sup>2</sup> This includes any disability-related limitations that preclude participation in a work and/or self-sufficiency-related activity. The disability-related needs or limitations may not have been identified or assessed prior to the noncompliance. BEM 233A.

THE DEPARTMENT IS ORDERED TO DO THE FOLLOWING WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE DATE OF MAILING OF THIS DECISION AND ORDER:

Initiate a redetermination of Claimant's prior noncompliance with the JET program and forward correspondence regarding the Department's decision to Claimant.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

/s/\_\_\_\_\_

C. Adam Purnell  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: January 16, 2013

Date Mailed: January 17, 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 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.

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

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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

CAP/cr

cc:

