

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 201319176
Issue No.: 1038
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: February 13, 2013
County: Wayne DHS (49)

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 13, 2013 from Detroit, Michigan. Participants included the above-named claimant. Participants on behalf of Department of Human Services (DHS) included [REDACTED], Specialist.

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 an unspecified date, DHS mailed Claimant a Work Participation Program Appointment Notice to attend WPP on 11/21/12.
4. Claimant failed to attend WPP on 11/21/12.

5. On 12/3/12, 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 12/10/12.
6. On 12/3/12, DHS mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action initiating termination of Claimant's FIP benefit eligibility, effective 1/2013, due to noncompliance with WPP participation.
7. Claimant failed to attend the triage.
8. DHS determined Claimant had no good cause for her failure to attend WPP.
9. On 12/13/12, Claimant requested a hearing disputing the FIP benefit termination.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Family Independence Program (FIP) was established pursuant to the Personal 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 against Claimant. It was not disputed that Claimant failed to attend a WPP orientation appointment scheduled for 11/21/12. Claimant also made no attempts to attend WPP thereafter. Claimant's failure to attend WPP is a sufficient basis for a noncompliance finding.

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. BEM 233A (5/2012), 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.

Claimant testified that she was not able to attend the WPP orientation or the triage because of day care and vehicle limitations. Specifically, Claimant testified that she walks approximately 1.5 miles every day to pick up her six year old child from school. Claimant testified that her child's school day ends at 2:40 p.m. Claimant also testified that she reported this obligation on numerous occasions to her specialist. Claimant's

specialist testified that she did not recall any conversations with, or messages from, Claimant concerning an obligation to pick up her child from school.

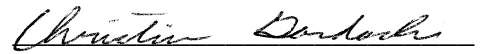
The obligation to pick up her six year old child from school was unverified but reasonably plausible. The issue of whether Claimant reported the obstacle to DHS is debatable. Neither DHS nor Claimant could verify whether Claimant reported the obligation.

Claimant's WPP orientation appointment was scheduled for 12:30 p.m. It would have been possible for Claimant to report timely for WPP orientation and to meet her child at school, though Claimant would likely have not been able to stay for the full orientation. Claimant implied that WPP was too far away from her residence for public transportation to be a reasonable option. Claimant also testified that she could not afford the bus tickets, even if public transportation was a reasonable option.

Whether Claimant had good cause is, in part, determined by whether Claimant reported that she lacked the money to purchase a single bus ticket and that she reported this obstacle to DHS. It is possible that such a scenario occurred. Doing so would require believing that Claimant's specialist failed to recall any of Claimant's allegedly numerous messages. The specialist testified that she actually called Claimant after the triage in an attempt to determine good cause prior to the termination of FIP benefits. The telephone call is above and beyond the specialist's duties. Such an action is consistent with someone who would assist clients with public transportation if a lack of transportation was reported as an obstacle. Based on the presented evidence, the most probable scenario is that Claimant's failure to attend WPP was due to a lack of effort rather than a lack of transportation and/or day care. It is found that Claimant failed to establish good cause for her failure to participate with WPP. Accordingly, the corresponding employment-related disqualification and FIP benefit termination were proper.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds that DHS properly terminated Claimant's FIP benefit eligibility, effective 1/2013, due to noncompliance with employment-related activities by Claimant. The actions taken by DHS are AFFIRMED.


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

Date Signed: 2/20/13

Date Mailed: 2/20/13

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:

