

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 201324770
Issue No: 3015
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: February 20, 2013
St. Joseph County DHS

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 request for a hearing received by the Department of Human Services (department) on January 17, 2013. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on February 20, 2013. Claimant's husband, [REDACTED], appeared and provided testimony on Claimant's behalf. The department was represented by [REDACTED], an eligibility specialist, and [REDACTED], an assistance payments supervisor, both with department's St. Joseph County office.

ISSUE

Whether the department properly determined Claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) eligibility?

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 or about December 7, 2012, Claimant applied for FAP benefits for herself and her husband. (Department Hearing Summary)
2. On December 8, 2012, the department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action (DHS 1605), informing her that her FAP benefits had been approved in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] effective January 1, 2013. (Department Exhibit 1)
3. On January 15, 2013, the department received Claimant's hearing request protesting the department's determination of her FAP benefit amount. (Request for a Hearing)

4. On January 28, 2013, the department provided the Administrative Law Judge with a hearing packet that contained the following: Hearing Summary, Claimant's Request for Hearing, Notice of Hearing, and December 8, 2012 Notice of Case Action. No other documents relating to Claimant's request for hearing were contained in the hearing packet. (Hearing Packet)

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Clients have the right to contest a department decision affective eligibility for benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. BAM 600. The department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness of that decision. BAM 600. 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)

The application forms and each written notice of case action inform clients of their right to a hearing. BAM 600. These include an explanation of how and where to file a hearing request, and the right to be assisted by and represented by anyone the client chooses. BAM 600. The client must receive a written notice of all case actions affecting eligibility or amount of benefits. When a case action is completed it must specify:

- The action being taken by the department.
- The reason(s) for the action.
- The specific manual item(s) that cites the legal base for an action, or the regulation, or law itself; see BAM 220.

The Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS) may grant a hearing on any of the following:

- Denial of an application and/or supplemental payments.
- Reduction in the amount of program benefits or service.
- Suspension or termination of program benefits or service.
- Restrictions under which benefits or services are provided.
- Delay of any action beyond standards of promptness.
- For FAP only, the current level of benefits or denial of expedited service. BAM 600.

For each hearing not resolved at a prehearing conference, the department is required to complete a Hearing Summary (DHS-3050). BAM 600. In the hearing summary, all case identifiers and notations on case status must be complete; see RFF 3050. The DHS-3050 narrative must include all of the following:

- Clear statement of the case action, including all programs involved in the case action.
- Facts which led to the action.
- Policy which supported the action.
- Correct address of the AHR or, if none, the client.
- Description of the documents the local office intends to offer as exhibits at the hearing. BAM 600.

During the hearing, the participants may give opening statements. BAM 600. Following the opening statement(s), if any, the ALJ directs the DHS case presenter to explain the position of the local office. BAM 600. The hearing summary, or highlights of it, may be read into the record at this time. BAM 600. The hearing summary may be used as a guide in presenting the evidence, witnesses and exhibits that support the Department's position. BAM 600. Department workers who attend the hearings are instructed to always include the following in planning the case presentation:

- An explanation of the action(s) taken.
- A summary of the policy or laws used to determine that the action taken was correct.
- Any clarifications by central office staff of the policy or laws used.
- The facts which led to the conclusion that the policy is relevant to the disputed case action.
- The DHS procedures ensuring that the client received adequate or timely notice of the proposed action and affording all other rights.

The ALJ determines the facts based only on evidence introduced at the hearing, draws a conclusion of law, and determines whether DHS policy was appropriately applied. The ALJ issues a final decision unless the ALJ believes that the applicable law does not support DHS policy or DHS policy is silent on the issue being considered. BAM 600. In that case, the ALJ recommends a decision and the policy hearing authority makes the final decision. BAM 600.

In the instant case, Claimant's hearing request clearly concerns the department's determination of her FAP benefit eligibility for the benefit period effective January 1, 2013. However, the department failed to provide any documentation in the hearing packet regarding the substantive basis for Claimant's hearing request – including, most importantly, the Bridges FAP Net EDG Income Results and Excess Shelter Deduction Worksheet for the benefit period at issue. Without this additional documentation in the hearing packet, the Administrative Law Judge is unable to make a reasoned, informed decision regarding the issue at hand.

Accordingly, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the department has failed to carry its burden of proof and did not provide information necessary to enable this Administrative Law Judge to determine whether the department followed policy as required under BAM 600.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, and for the reasons stated on the record, is unable to decide whether the department acted in accordance with policy in determining Claimant's FAP eligibility for the benefit period effective January 1, 2013.

Therefore, the department's determination of Claimant's FAP benefit eligibility for the benefit period effective January 1, 2013 is **REVERSED** and the department shall immediately initiate a redetermination of Claimant's FAP benefit eligibility for the benefit period effective January 1, 2013 and issue any supplemental checks if she is otherwise entitled to them.

It is **SO ORDERED**.

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

Date Signed: February 21, 2013

Date Mailed: February 22, 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 60 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 effect the substantial rights of 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 System
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P.O. Box 30639
Lansing, MI 48909-07322

SDS/cr

cc:

