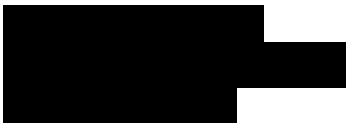


STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 201341712
Issue No.: 3055
Case No.: 100181421
Hearing Date: August 22, 2013
County: Genesee (02)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: C. Adam Purnell

HEARING DECISION FOR INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 and in accordance with 7 CFR 273.16 and Mich Admin Code, Rule 400.3130 upon the Department of Human Services' (Department) request for a hearing. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on August 22, 2013 from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by Craig Carlton of the Office of Inspector General (OIG).

Respondent did not appear at the hearing and it was held in Respondent's absence pursuant to 7 CFR 273.16(e), Mich Admin Code R 400.3130(5), or Mich Admin Code R 400.3187(5).

ISSUES

1. Did Respondent receive an overissuance (OI) of Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits that the Department is entitled to recoup?
2. Did Respondent commit an Intentional Program Violation (IPV)?
3. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. The Department's OIG filed a hearing request on April 24, 2013 to establish an OI of benefits received by Respondent as a result of Respondent having allegedly committed an IPV.

2. The OIG has requested that Respondent be disqualified from receiving program benefits.
3. Respondent was a recipient of FAP benefits during the period of January 1, 2011 through August 31, 2012.
4. Respondent was aware that buying or selling of FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food was unlawful.
5. Respondent had no apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement.
6. The Department's OIG indicates that the time period they are considering the fraud period is January 1, 2011 through August 31, 2012.¹
7. During the alleged fraud periods, Respondent was issued a total of [REDACTED] in FAP benefits from the State of Michigan.²
8. Respondent was entitled to [REDACTED] in FAP benefits during this time period.
9. Respondent did receive an OI in the amount of [REDACTED] under the FAP program.
10. The Department has established that Respondent committed an IPV.
11. This was Respondent's first IPV.
12. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent at the last known address and was not returned by the US Post Office as undeliverable.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Department policies are contained in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), and the Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

The Food Assistance Program (FAP) [formerly known as the Food Stamp (FS) program] is established by 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 (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FAP pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and 1999 AC, Rule 400.3001 through Rule 400.3015.

¹ The Department identified the following three fraud periods: July 1, 2011 through March 1, 2012; April 1, 2012 through June 30, 2012; and July 1, 2012 through August 31, 2012.

² Respondent was issued [REDACTED] during July 1, 2011 through March 1, 2012; Respondent was issued [REDACTED] during April 1, 2012 through June 30, 2012; and Respondent was issued [REDACTED] during July 1, 2012 through August 31, 2012. The total is [REDACTED].

An Intentional Program Violation (IPV) is a benefit overissuance (OI) resulting from the willful withholding of information or other violation of law or regulation by the client or his/her authorized representative. See Bridges Program Glossary (BPG) at page 24. When a client group receives more benefits than they are entitled to receive, the Department must attempt to recoup the OI. BAM 700 (2013).

Suspected IPV means an OI exists for which all three of the following conditions exist:

- 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. See BAM 720.

An IPV is suspected when there is clear and convincing evidence that the client has intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing or preventing reduction of program benefits or eligibility. BAM 720 (2013).

The Department's OIG requests IPV hearings for cases when:

- benefit overissuances are not forwarded to the prosecutor,
- prosecution of welfare fraud is declined by the prosecutor for a reason other than lack of evidence, and
- the total overissuance amount is [REDACTED] or more, or
- the total overissuance amount is less than [REDACTED], and
 - the group has a previous intentional program violation, 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.

An IPV is suspected for a client who is alleged to have trafficked or is trafficking FAP benefits. BAM 720. "Trafficking" is the buying or selling of FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food. BAM 700. A person is disqualified from FAP when an administrative hearing decision, a repayment and disqualification agreement or court decision determines FAP benefits were trafficked. BAM 203. These FAP trafficking

disqualifications are a result of: (1) fraudulently using, transferring, altering, acquiring, or possessing coupons, authorization cards, or access devices; or (2) redeeming or presenting for payment coupons known to be fraudulently obtained or transferred. BEM 203.

With regard to FAP cases only, an IPV exists when an administrative hearing decision, a repayment and disqualification agreement or court decision determines FAP benefits were trafficked. BAM 700.

The OI amount for trafficking-related IPV is the value of the trafficked benefits as determined by: (1) the court decision; (2) the individual's admission; or (3) documentation used to establish the trafficking determination, such as an affidavit from a store owner or sworn testimony from a federal or state investigator of how much a client could have reasonably trafficked in that store. BAM 720. This can be established through circumstantial evidence. BAM 720.

A disqualified recipient remains a member of an active group as long as he/she lives with them. BAM 720. Other eligible group members may continue to receive benefits. BAM 720.

Clients who commit an IPV are disqualified for a standard disqualification period except when a court orders a different period. BAM 720. Clients are disqualified for periods of 1 (one) year for the first IPV, 2 (two) years for the second IPV, a lifetime disqualification for the third IPV, and 10 (ten) years for a concurrent receipt of benefits. BAM 720. If the court does not address disqualification in its order, the standard period applies. BAM 720.

Clients must report changes in circumstances that potentially affect eligibility or benefit amount. BAM 105. Clients are required to report changes within 10 (ten) days of receiving the first payment reflecting the change. BAM 105. Clients are required to report changes in circumstances within 10 (ten) days after the client is aware of them. BAM 105. These changes include, but are not limited to changes regarding: (1) persons in the home; (2) marital status; (3) address and shelter cost changes that result from the move; (4) vehicles; (5) assets; (6) child support expenses paid; (7) health or hospital coverage and premiums; or (8) child care needs or providers. BAM 105.

In the present case, the record shows that Respondent reported that his Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) had been stolen or lost on multiple occasions during in 2011. In fact, the record demonstrated Respondent reported 10 EBT cards lost or stolen from April 2011 through January 2012. The IG-311 EBT purchase history showed that Respondent's EBT card had multiple purchases on the same day or within a short time period.

The record also shows that Respondent was incarcerated from April 2, 2012 through June 27, 2012 and continued to receive FAP benefits during that time period. Respondent was a parole absconder on June 29, 2012. Respondent failed to report his

incarceration to the Department at any time. On December 17, 2012, the OIG Agent contacted Respondent and inquired about the numerous lost cards and frequent purchases as evidenced by the EBT history. Respondent stated that he often misplaces his EBT cards and that he purchased food for his wife [REDACTED] which would explain the frequency of purchases on the same date. However, the record shows that Respondent and [REDACTED] were married on May 29, 2011 and that his wife (had she been a group member) had unreported income that would have resulted in FAP closure due to excess income.

Respondent's signature on the Assistance Application in this record certifies that he was aware that fraudulent participation in FAP could result in criminal, civil or administrative claims. Respondent had no apparent physical or mental impairment that limits his understanding or ability to fulfill these reporting responsibilities. Policy permits the use of circumstantial evidence.

This Administrative Law Judge therefore concludes that the Department has shown, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent committed an intentional violation of the FAP program resulting in a total [REDACTED] overissuance. This is Respondent's first FAP IPV. Consequently, the Department's request for FAP program disqualification and full restitution must be granted.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, concludes that:

1. Respondent did commit an IPV.
2. Respondent did receive an OI of program benefits in the amount of [REDACTED] from the FAP program.

The Department is ORDERED to initiate recoupment procedures for the amount of [REDACTED] in accordance with Department policy.

It is FURTHER ORDERED that Respondent be disqualified from FAP for a period of 12 months.

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IT IS SO ORDERED.

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

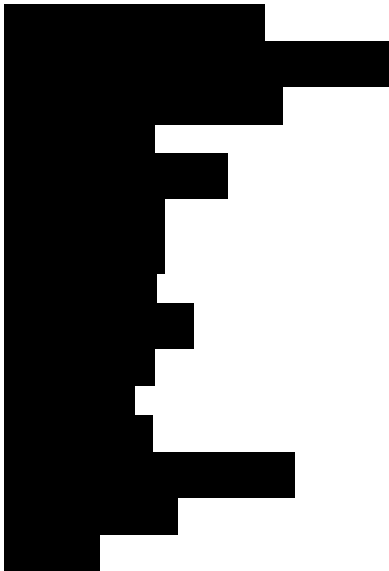
Date Signed: 08/26/2013

Date Mailed: 08/28/2013

NOTICE: The law provides that within 30 days of receipt of the above Decision and Order, the Respondent may appeal it to the circuit court for the county in which he/she lives.

CAP/aca

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