

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

██████████
██████████
██████████

Reg. No.: 2013-46114
Issue Nos.: 1005,1038
Case No.: ██████████
Hearing Date: June 5, 2013
County: Wayne (49)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Zainab Baydoun

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 conducted from Detroit, Michigan on Wednesday, June 5, 2013. Claimant appeared and testified. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included ██████████, Family Independence Manager.

ISSUE

Did the Department properly close Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case due to a failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities without good cause?

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 recipient of FIP benefits.
2. On April 29, 2013, the Department sent Claimant a Notice of Noncompliance instructing her to attend a triage appointment on May 6, 2013 to discuss whether good cause existed for her noncompliance. (Exhibit 2)
3. On April 29, 2013 the Department sent Claimant a Notice of Case Action informing her that the Department intended to terminate her FIP benefits effective

June 1, 2013 for failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities without good cause. (Exhibit 4)

4. Claimant's FIP case closed effective June 1, 2013 for failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities without good cause and a three month sanction was imposed.
5. On May 6, 2013, the Department received Claimant's request for a hearing disputing the closure of her FIP case.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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

The Family Independence Program (FIP) was established pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Public Law 104-193, 42 USC 601, *et seq.* The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FIP pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3101 through R 400.3131. FIP replaced the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program effective October 1, 1996.

As a condition of FIP eligibility, all Work Eligible Individuals ("WEI") must engage in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities. BEM 233A (January 2013), p. 1. The WEI can be considered noncompliant for several reasons including: failing or refusing to appear and participate with the work participation program or other employment service provider, failing or refusing to appear for a scheduled appointment or meeting related to assigned activities, and failing or refusing to participate in employment and/or self sufficiency related activities. BEM 233A, pp 1, 2. 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, pp. 3, 4.

Good cause includes any of the following: the client is employed for 40 hours/week; the client is physically or mentally unfit for the job; the client has a debilitating illness or injury or a spouse or child's illness or injury requires in-home care by the client; the Department, employment service provider, contractor, agency or employer failed to make a reasonable accommodation for the client's disability; no child care; no transportation; the employment involves illegal activities; the client experiences discrimination; an unplanned event or factor likely preventing or interfering with employment; long commute; or eligibility for an extended FIP period. BEM 233A, p. 4. A WEI who fails, without good cause, to participate in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, must be penalized. BEM 233A, p.1.

In processing a FIP closure, the Department is required to send the client a notice of noncompliance, which must include the date(s) of the noncompliance; the reason the client was determined to be noncompliant; and the penalty duration. BEM 233A. p.8-9. Pursuant to BAM 220, a Notice of Case Action must also be sent which provides the reason(s) for the action. BAM 220 (November 2012), p. 9. Work participation program participants will not be terminated from a work participation program without first scheduling a triage meeting with the client to jointly discuss noncompliance and good cause. BEM 233A, p. 7. A triage must be conducted and good cause must be considered even if the client does not attend. BEM 233A, pp.7-8 Clients must comply with triage requirements and provide good cause verification within the negative action period. BEM 233A, p. 7.

Good cause is based on the best information available during the triage and prior to the negative action date. BEM 233A, p. 8. The first occurrence of non-compliance without good cause results in FIP closure for not less than three calendar months; the second occurrence results in closure for not less than six months; and a third occurrence results in a FIP lifetime sanction. BEM 233A, p. 6.

In this case, Claimant was an ongoing recipient of FIP benefits. As a condition of receiving FIP benefits, Claimant was required to be employed or participate in the Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) program for 20 hours per week, as she was the caretaker of a child under six years old. At the hearing, the Department testified that because Claimant was not meeting her weekly hour requirements for work participation, a reengagement meeting was held on December 20, 2012 where Claimant agreed to attend job search. Claimant failed to participate in job search and a second reengagement meeting was held on February 28, 2013. At the February 28, 2013 reengagement meeting, Claimant reported that she had gained employment and provided pay stubs as verification, however, they were insufficient, as they did not verify a full 20 hours of employment weekly.

The Department sent Claimant a Noncompliance Warning Notice and scheduled a third reengagement meeting for April 22, 2013, which Claimant did not attend. At the hearing, Claimant stated that she did not attend because she was unfamiliar with the location of the meeting. As a result, on April 29, 2013, the Department sent Claimant a Notice of Noncompliance instructing her to attend a triage appointment on May 6, 2013 to discuss whether good cause existed for her noncompliance as well as a Notice of Case Action informing her that the Department intended to close her FIP case effective June 1, 2013 and impose a three month FIP sanction for a first occurrence of noncooperation with employment related activities. (Exhibits 2, 4);BEM 233A. p.8-9;BAM 220 (November 2012), p. 9.

A triage meeting was conducted on May 6, 2013, at which Claimant appeared. At the meeting Claimant informed the Department that she had gained new employment at Ford Field, however, she did not provide additional verification of her previous employment and pay stubs showing that she was working 20 hours per week in order to establish good cause for her noncompliance. Claimant also stated that she did not know

how to get to the new PATH location and was having difficulty attending. Claimant stated that the Department did assist her by providing her with directions to the PATH program, but that she takes the bus and could not figure out how to get there using the bus system. The Department determined that Claimant did not have good cause for her lack of participation in PATH and for her failure to provide verification that she met the 20 hour weekly requirement with her previous employer.

The Department sent Claimant a Verification Checklist (VCL) on May 13, 2013 requesting that she submit proof of her new employment at Ford Field and submit proof of income showing that she is employed 20 hours per week. These proofs were due on or before May 23, 2013. (Exhibit 3). She was also instructed to submit verification of loss of employment from her previous employer. The Department testified that on May 28, 2013, Claimant submitted pay stubs from her previous employer but not a loss of employment verification. Claimant testified that prior to the due date on the VCL, she had not yet received a pay check from Ford Field. The Department presented Claimant's first pay check at the hearing, which verifies that Claimant's hire date was May 4, 2013. This pay stub shows that Claimant worked seven hours of work for the period of May 4, 2013 through May 17, 2013. (Exhibit 5).

The Department closed Claimant's FIP case effective June 1, 2013 for failure to participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities without good cause and a three month sanction was imposed. BEM 233A, p. 8. Because there was no good cause established for Claimant's failure to participate in the PATH program or her failure to provide sufficient verification that she was employed for 20 hours per week, the Department acted in accordance with Department policy when it closed Claimant's FIP case based on noncompliance with employment and/or self-sufficiency related required activities without good cause and imposed a three month sanction. Accordingly, the Department's actions are AFFIRMED.

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, finds that the Department acted in accordance with Department policy when it terminated Claimant's FIP benefits effective June 1, 2013 due to noncompliance without good cause and imposed a three month sanction. Accordingly, the Department's actions are AFFIRMED.



Zainab Baydoun
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: June 13, 2013

Date Mailed: June 13, 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. (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

ZB/cl

cc:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]