

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 201369061
Issue No.: 1005;3005
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: NOVEMBER 25, 2013
County: SAGINAW

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Robert J. Chavez

HEARING DECISION FOR INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION

Upon the request for a hearing by the Department of Human Services (Department), this matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9, and in accordance with Titles 7, 42 and 45 of the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), particularly 7 CFR 273.16, and with Mich Admin Code, R 400.3130 and R 400.3178. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on November 25, 2013 from Detroit, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG).

Participants on behalf of Respondent included: .

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 400.3178(5).

ISSUES

1. Did Respondent receive an overissuance (OI) of
 Family Independence Program (FIP) State Disability Assistance (SDA)
 Food Assistance Program (FAP) Child Development and Care (CDC)
 Medical Assistance (MA)
benefits that the Department is entitled to recoup?

2. Did Respondent, by clear and convincing evidence, commit an Intentional Program Violation (IPV)?

3. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving
 Family Independence Program (FIP)? State Disability Assistance (SDA)?
 Food Assistance Program (FAP)? Child Development and Care (CDC)?

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 September 9, 2013, to establish an OI of benefits received by Respondent as a result of Respondent having allegedly committed an IPV.
2. The OIG has has not requested that Respondent be disqualified from receiving program benefits.
3. Respondent was a recipient of FIP FAP SDA CDC MA benefits issued by the Department.
4. The Department's OIG indicates that the time period it is considering the fraud period is [REDACTED] 2012 through [REDACTED], 2012.
5. During the fraud period, Respondent was issued \$1,265 in FIP FAP SDA CDC MA benefits by the State of Michigan, and the Department alleges that Respondent was entitled to \$0 in such benefits during this time period.
6. The Department alleges that Respondent received an OI in FIP FAP SDA CDC MA benefits in the amount of \$1,265.
7. This was Respondent's first second third alleged IPV.
8. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent at the last known address and was was not returned by the US Post Office as undeliverable.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Department policies are contained in the Department of Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), Department of Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), and Department of Human Services Reference Tables Manual (RFT). Prior to August 1, 2008, Department policies were contained in the Department of Human Services Program Administrative Manuals (PAM), Department of Human Services Program Eligibility Manual (PEM), and Department of Human Services Reference Schedules Manual (RFS).

The Family Independence Program (FIP) was established pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, PL 104-193, and 42 USC 601 to 679c. The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FIP pursuant to MCL 400.10 and 400.57a and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3101 to .3131.

The Food Assistance Program (FAP) [formerly known as the Food Stamp program] is established by the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, 7 USC 2011 to 2036a and is implemented by the federal regulations contained in 7 CFR 271.1 to 285.5. The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FAP pursuant to MCL 400.10 and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3001 to .3015.

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by the Title XIX of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396-1396w-5, and is implemented by 42 CFR 400.200 to 1008.59. The Department of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the MA program pursuant to MCL 400.10 and MCL 400.105.

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program is established by the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b. The Department of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10 and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3151-.3180.

The Child Development and Care (CDC) program is established by Titles IVA, IVE and XX of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 601-619, 670-679c, and 1397-1397m-5; the Child Care and Development Block Grant of 1990, PL 101-508, 42 USC 9858 to 9858g; and the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, PL 104-193. The program is implemented by 45 CFR 98.1-99.33. The Department administers the program pursuant to MCL 400.10 and provides services to adults and children pursuant to MCL 400.14(1) and Mich Admin Code, R 400.5001-.5020.

When a client group receives more benefits than they are entitled to receive, DHS must attempt to recoup the OI. BAM 700, p. 1.

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.

BAM 700 (2013), p. 6; BAM 720, p. 1.

An IPV is also suspected for a client who is alleged to have trafficked FAP benefits. BAM 720, p. 1.

An IPV requires that the Department establish by 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, p. 1 (emphasis in original); see also 7 CFR 273(e)(6). Clear and convincing evidence is evidence sufficient to result in a clear and firm belief that the proposition is true. See M Civ JI 8.01.

The federal Food Stamp regulations read in part:

(c) Definition of Intentional Program Violation. Intentional Program Violation shall consist of having intentionally:

- (1) made a false or misleading statement, or misrepresented, concealed or withheld facts; or
- (2) committed any act that constitutes a violation of the Food Stamp Act, the Food Stamp Program Regulations, or any State statute for the purpose of using, presenting, transferring, acquiring, receiving, possessing or trafficking of coupons, authorization cards or reusable documents used as part of an automated benefit delivery system (access device). 7 CFR 273.16(c).

(6) Criteria for determining intentional program violation. The hearing authority shall base the determination of intentional program violation on clear and convincing evidence which demonstrates that the household member(s) committed, and intended to commit, intentional program violation as defined in paragraph (c) of this section. 7 CFR 273.16(c)(6).

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

- benefit overissuance 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 \$1000 or more, or
- the total overissuance amount is less than \$1000, 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,
- the alleged fraud is committed by a state/government employee.

BAM 720 (2013), p. 12.

A court or hearing decision that finds a client committed IPV disqualifies that client from receiving program benefits. A disqualified recipient remains a member of an active group as long as he lives with them. Other eligible group members may continue to receive benefits. BAM 720, p. 12.

Clients who commit an IPV are disqualified for a standard disqualification period except when a court orders a different period, or except when the overissuance relates to MA. BAM 720, p. 13. Refusal to repay will not cause denial of current or future MA if the client is otherwise eligible. BAM 710 (2013), p. 2. Clients are disqualified for periods of one year for the first IPV, two years for the second IPV, lifetime disqualification for the third IPV, and ten years for a concurrent receipt of benefits. BAM 720, p. 16.

Therefore, the undersigned may only find an IPV if there is clear and convincing evidence that the respondent intentionally made a false or misleading statement, or intentionally withheld information with the intention to commit an IPV, with regard to the FAP program. Thus, the Department must not only prove that the respondent committed an act, but that there was intent to commit the act.

In this case, the Department has established that respondent was aware of the responsibility to report all changes to the Department. Respondent has no apparent physical or mental impairment that limits the understanding or ability to fulfill the reporting responsibilities. However, the undersigned is not convinced that the Department has met its burden of proof in providing clear and convincing evidence that the respondent intended to defraud the Department with regard to their FAP and FIP eligibility.

The burden of proof that the Department must meet in order to prove Intentional Program Violation is very high. It is not enough to prove that the respondent was aware of the requirements to report at some point, nor is it enough to prove that the respondent did not report in a timely manner. The Department must prove in a clear and convincing manner, that, not only did the respondent withhold critical information, but that the respondent withheld this information with the intent to commit an IPV.

In other words, the Department must prove that the respondent did not simply forget to meet their obligations to report, but rather, actively sought to defraud the Department.

The Department has not proven that in the current case. Respondent applied for, and received, FAP and FIP benefits on [REDACTED] 2012. Respondent did not have a change of income for two months after that redetermination.

Furthermore, this was not a case of the Department discovering a misrepresentation or unreported income themselves. The Department discovered the change in income in question because the respondent reported this income directly to DHS in November 2012. Furthermore, respondent reported this change in income to her JET caseworker immediately after securing the employment; as JET is a DHS contractor, and administers DHS programs, the undersigned holds that reporting income to JET was the same as reporting directly to DHS. Respondent should not be held responsible for a failure in communication between DHS and its sub-agencies. A failure in communication such as this is best regarded as agency error. At the very least, JET should have informed the respondent to report directly to her DHS caseworker.

Even assuming that the respondent had failed report the change when it occurred in October, 2012, the undersigned would not find an IPV in the current case, if only for the fact that respondent's self-report makes it extremely unlikely that respondent was intentionally trying to withhold information from the Department for the purposes of securing more benefits, especially given that the report in question was a mere one month after a required report, and was done voluntarily, after informing her JET caseworker of the change.

Therefore, as the Department has failed to provide clear and convincing evidence that claimant intentionally withheld information in order to secure additional FAP and FIP benefits, the undersigned holds that claimant did not commit an IPV.

Because the undersigned finds the evidence shows that the respondent reported the change in income, the undersigned holds that the error in the current case is agency error, and recoupment may only proceed under the agency error guidelines.

Unfortunately, agency error is still an error, and policy provides that agency errors over \$250 must be recouped. However, the Administrative Law Judge, after reviewing the supplied issuance budgets, is not convinced that the respondent received \$668 in FAP benefits and \$597 in FIP benefits they were not eligible for. The overissuance budgets provided assume that the respondent committed an IPV and intentionally did not report income; as such, the budgets do not allow respondent a 20% earned income deduction.

Furthermore, the FAP budgets also assume that respondent received a full FIP amount; if this FIP amount is to be recouped, it would be as if respondent never received the FIP benefits in question. The Department may not calculate an FAP budget as if the respondent received FIP, when that FIP amount is to be repaid to the Department.

As the undersigned holds that the error in this case is agency error, and that respondent did report her income, respondent is entitled to all deductions that would normally be given in an FAP and FIP budget, including all deductions for reported income and the removal of respondent's FIP recoupment. Therefore, before recoupment can be authorized, the agency must first establish the correct overissuance amount. Until the correct overissuance amount is supplied by the Department and proven through substantial evidence, the undersigned will not allow recoupment in the matter at hand.


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, if any, concludes that:

1. Respondent did did not commit an IPV by clear and convincing evidence.
2. Any error in the current case is the result of Agency Error.
3. The Department has failed to establish that respondent received an overissuance in the amount of \$1,265 from the following program(s) FIP FAP SDA CDC MA.

The Department is ORDERED to
 delete the OI and cease any recoupment action.

This order does not in any way prevent the Department from attempting to establish an OI based on Agency Error in a subsequent proceeding using revised overissuance calculations.



Robert J. Chavez
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 12/18/2013

Date Mailed: 12/18/2013

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.

RJC/hw

cc:

