

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 2013-57114
Issue No(s):
Case No.:
Hearing Date: December 3, 2013
County: Wayne 55

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Dale Malewska

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 December 3, 2013 from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], Regulation Agent 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 400.3178(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 July 12, 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. Respondent was was not aware of the responsibility to USE EBT card properly.
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 it is considering the fraud period is November 2010 through July 2011.
7. During the fraud period, Respondent was issued \$ [REDACTED] in FIP FAP SDA CDC MA benefits by the State of Michigan, and the Department alleges that Respondent was entitled to \$ [REDACTED] in such benefits during this time period.
8. The Department alleges that Respondent received an OI in FIP FAP SDA CDC MA benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED]
9. This was Respondent's first second third alleged IPV.
10. 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

¹Tallied as \$ [REDACTED] Department's Exhibit A, p. 41

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 9858q; 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.

The Department's OIG requests IPV hearings for the following cases:

- FAP trafficking OIs that are not forwarded to the prosecutor,
- prosecution of welfare fraud or FAP trafficking is declined by the prosecutor for a reason other than lack of evidence, and
 - the total OI amount for the FIP, SDA, CDC, MA and FAP programs is \$ [REDACTED] or more, or
 - the total OI amount is less than \$ [REDACTED] **and**

- the group has a previous IPV, or
- the alleged IPV involves FAP trafficking, or
- the alleged fraud involves concurrent receipt of assistance (see BEM 222), or
- the alleged fraud is committed by a state/government employee.

BAM 720 (7-1-2013), p. 12.

Intentional Program Violation

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 reporting responsibilities.

BAM 700 (7-1-2013), 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; 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.

In this case, the OIG witness [REDACTED] provided credible, sufficient, un rebutted testimony and other credible evidence to establish that in March of 2012 a joint USDA-OIG investigation determined that the [REDACTED], located at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] had inadequate store [food-type] inventory or SNAP merchandise to support the food stamp redemptions submitted by the vendor on a monthly basis in comparison to their peers in the surrounding half-mile vicinity.

Such suspicious redemptions, according to [REDACTED] included multiple transactions on the same day or in a short period of time with high dollar amounts and/or repetitive dollar amounts and even-ending transactions occurring in close proximity.

The OIG witness also testified that numerous other trafficking suspects admitted that the store owners allowed them to purchase prohibited household items, cigarettes and other non-eligible EBT items under the SNAP program. As a result, the USDA-OIG determined that the Everyday Super Discounts store was being used as a front for FAP trafficking; its SNAP eligibility was revoked.

Between the dates of November 2010 and July 2011 the Respondent [REDACTED] was responsible for participating in 8 unauthorized transactions involving the misuse of her EBT card. The OIG established misuse of the Respondent's EBT totaling \$ [REDACTED] overissuance of FAP benefits.

Supported by persuasive documentary evidence the OIG demonstrated the above referenced investigation as well as the vendor's revocation of eligibility from the SNAP program. The store in question had little counter space,² no grocery carts, no hand-carry baskets and appeared to function more as a general merchandise/dry goods store.

As the Department's photographs and documentary evidence showed there was only one POS device and only one cash register. The food selection was minimal. See Exhibit A at pp. 7 – 10. There was little SNAP approved food. The store stock did not include any fresh meats, produce or frozen foods. In the dairy category there was only canned milk available.

The OIG witness said that the store in question did not have the supply train [or counter space] necessary to support the sizes of their EBT reported transactions – and then to be able to replenish – within a reasonable amount of time.

The focus of this store was that of convenience; single serving beverages and snack food and largely non-food items. The Respondent's transactions at the vendor's place of business demonstrated a repetitive pattern often registering sales in excess of \$ [REDACTED] with multiple transactions on the same day.

Based on the credible testimony and the documentary evidence, it is concluded that the OIG established, under a clear and convincing standard, that Respondent committed an IPV in this matter – resulting in OI of FAP \$ [REDACTED] for the period of November 2010 through July of 2011. See Department's Exhibit A – throughout. This being the Respondent's first IPV violation - a one year disqualification is appropriate.

Disqualification

A court or hearing decision that finds a client committed IPV disqualifies that client from receiving program benefits. BAM 720, p. 12. A disqualified recipient remains a member

²The amount of benefit allegedly passed to the vendor would represent a bulk of grocery product [if there were such SNAP products] that would not fit on the counter for check out. See Depart. Ex. 1 at page 14

of an active group as long as she lives with them, and other eligible group members may continue to receive benefits. BAM 720, p. 13.

Clients who commit an IPV are disqualified for a standard disqualification period except when a court orders a different period, or except when the OI relates to MA. BAM 720. 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 FAP concurrent receipt of benefits. BAM 720, p. 16.

Overissuance

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

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. Respondent did did not receive an OI of program benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] from the following program(s) FIP FAP SDA CDC MA.

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 FIP FAP SDA CDC for a period of 12 months. 24 months. lifetime.

/s/
Dale Malewska
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 1/10/14

Date Mailed: 1/10/14

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.

DM/tb

cc:

