

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 2014-32123
Issue No(s): 3002
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: April 10, 2014
County: Wayne (17)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Zainab Baydoun

HEARING DECISION

Following Claimant's request for a hearing, this matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and 400.37; 7 CFR 273.15 to 273.18; 42 CFR 431.200 to 431.250; 45 CFR 99.1 to 99.33; and 45 CFR 205.10. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on April 10, 2014, from Detroit, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included Claimant. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED], Assistance Payment Worker.

ISSUE

Did the Department properly close Claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) case based on a failure to verify requested information?

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 FAP benefits.
2. In connection with a redetermination, Claimant's eligibility to receive FAP benefits was reviewed. (Exhibit 1)
3. On February 20, 2014, the Department sent Claimant a Verification Checklist (VCL) requesting that he submit verifications by March 3, 2014. (Exhibit 2)
4. On March 4, 2014, the Department sent Claimant a Notice of Case Action informing him that effective March 1, 2014, his FAP case closed on the basis that he failed to return verification of his employment. (Exhibit 3)

5. On March 7, 2014, Claimant submitted a hearing request disputing the Department's actions.

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), Department of Human Services Reference Tables Manual (RFT), and Department of Human Services Emergency Relief Manual (ERM).

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.

Additionally, verification is usually required at application/redetermination and for a reported change affecting eligibility or benefit level. BAM 130 (January 2014), p.1. To request verification of information, the Department sends a Verification Checklist (VCL) which tells the client what verification is required, how to obtain it, and the due date. BAM 130, p. 3. FAP clients are given 10 calendar days to provide the verifications requested by the Department. Verifications are considered to be timely if received by the date they are due. BAM 130, pp.5-6. For FAP cases, the Department sends a negative action notice when the client indicates a refusal to provide a verification or the time period given has elapsed and the client has not made a reasonable effort to provide it. BAM 130, p. 6.

In this case, the Department testified that because Claimant indicated that he was earning income from scrap metal on his redetermination, it sent Claimant a VCL requesting that he submit verification of income and employment by March 3, 2014. (Exhibits 1 and 2). The Department stated that because it did not receive all of the requested verifications by the due date, it sent Claimant a Notice of Case Action on March 4, 2014, and informed him that his case had been closed effective March 1, 2014. (Exhibit 3). The Department testified that on March 7, 2014, Claimant submitted some verifications, however, because they were late and not on company letterhead, they were unacceptable. (Exhibit 4).

At the hearing, Claimant confirmed that he received the VCL around February 28, 2014. Claimant stated that he took the VCL to his employer and provided his employer with his Department case worker's name and fax number so the employment verification could be sent. Claimant testified that he was informed by his employer that the documents were faxed by the due date, twice. Claimant stated that the first time he became aware that the documents were not received by the Department was after receiving the Notice of Case Action, at which time he dropped off the requested documentation to the Department on March 7, 2014.

After further review of the VCL, the Department did not specifically inform Claimant of what he was required to submit, as the VCL simply states “[p]lease provide additional information about: employment unknown.” (Exhibit 2). The Department stated that Claimant was informed on the redetermination of what verifications were required and that the VCL did not need to include this information. Under the facts in this case, based on the evidence presented, Claimant and his employer made a reasonable effort to provide the information requested by the Department. BAM 130, p 6.


The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, finds that the Department failed to satisfy its burden of establishing that it acted in accordance with Department policy when it closed Claimant’s FAP case effective March 1, 2014, based on a failure to verify requested information.

DECISION AND ORDER

Accordingly, the Department’s decision is REVERSED.

THE DEPARTMENT IS ORDERED TO BEGIN DOING THE FOLLOWING, IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEPARTMENT POLICY AND CONSISTENT WITH THIS HEARING DECISION, WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE DATE OF MAILING OF THIS DECISION AND ORDER:

1. Reinstate Claimant’s FAP case effective March 1, 2014;
2. Issue supplements to Claimant for any FAP benefits that he was entitled to receive but did not from March 1, 2014, ongoing; and
3. Notify Claimant in writing of its decision.


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

Date Signed: April 16, 2014

Date Mailed: April 16, 2014

NOTICE OF APPEAL: 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 or Reconsideration was made, within 30 days of the receipt date of the Decision and Order of Reconsideration or Rehearing Decision.

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).

A Request for Rehearing or Reconsideration may be granted when one of the following exists:

- Newly discovered evidence that existed at the time of the original hearing that could affect the outcome of the original hearing decision;
- Misapplication of manual policy or law in the hearing decision which led to a wrong conclusion;
- Typographical, mathematical or other obvious error in the hearing decision that affects the rights of the client;
- Failure of the ALJ to address in the hearing decision relevant issues raised in the hearing request.

The Department, AHR or the claimant must specify all reasons for the request. MAHS will not review any response to a request for rehearing/reconsideration. A request must be *received* in MAHS within 30 days of the date the hearing decision is mailed.

The written request must be faxed to (517) 335-6088 and be labeled as follows:

Attention: MAHS Rehearing/Reconsideration Request

If submitted by mail, the written request must be addressed as follows:

Michigan Administrative Hearings
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P.O. Box 30639
Lansing, Michigan 48909-07322

ZB/tlf

cc:

