

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**



Reg. No.: 14-002560  
Issue No.: 1008  
Case No.:   
Hearing Date: July 3, 2014  
County: Mecosta

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Michael S. Newell

**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 July 11, 2014, from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included Claimant. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included and .

**ISSUE**

Did the Department properly terminate Claimant's FIP for PATH noncompliance?

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

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

1. MRT denied Claimant's claim for disability on 4/9/14.
2. Claimant was sent a PATH appointment notice on 4/18/14 to attend PATH on April 28, 2014.
3. Claimant did not attend PATH.
4. A Notice of Case Action canceling FIP and sanctioning Claimant for noncompliance and Notice of Noncompliance was sent on May 7, 2014.
5. A phone triage was held on May 15, 2014.
6. No good cause was found for noncompliance.
7. Claimant requested hearing on May 16, 2014.

## **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 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.

Additionally, Effective January 1, 2013, as a condition of eligibility, FIP applicants must attend the Partnership Accountability Training Hope (PATH) program and maintain 21 days' attendance. BEM 229. The program requirements, education and training opportunities, and assessments will be covered by PATH when a mandatory PATH participant is referred at application. BEM 229.

A Work Eligible Individual (WEI) and non-WEI<sup>1</sup>, who fails to participate in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities without good cause, must be penalized. BEM 233A. Depending on the case situation, penalties include the following: (1) delay in eligibility at application; (2) ineligibility (denial or termination of FIP with no minimum penalty period); (3) case closure for a minimum of three months for the first episode of noncompliance, six months for the second episode of noncompliance and lifetime closure for the third episode of noncompliance. BEM 233A. The goal of the FIP penalty policy is to obtain client compliance with appropriate work and/or self-sufficiency related assignments and to ensure that barriers to such compliance have been identified and removed. BEM 233A. The goal is to bring the client into compliance. BEM 233A.

The Department's computer system known as "Bridges" will automatically issue a DHS-4785, PATH Program Appointment Notice, from Bridges at application, member add, or when a client loses a deferral to schedule an appointment for each mandatory PATH participant. BEM 229. When assigned, clients must engage in and comply with all PATH assignments while the FIP application is pending. BEM 229. PATH engagement is a condition of FIP eligibility. BEM 229. Failure by a client to participate fully in assigned activities while the FIP application is pending will result in denial of FIP benefits. BEM 229. Bridges automatically denies FIP benefits for noncompliance while the application is pending. BEM 229. Bridges will not penalize Food Assistance when a client fails to attend PATH as a condition of eligibility when the noncompliant individual is not active FIP on the date of the noncompliance. BEM 229. Clients must be active FIP and FAP on the date of FIP noncompliance to apply a FIP penalty to the FAP case. BEM 229.

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<sup>1</sup> Except ineligible grantees, clients deferred for lack of child care, and disqualified aliens. See BEM 228.

Certain clients have particular circumstances which may make their participation in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities problematic. BEM 230A. Unless otherwise deferred, they must be referred to the work participation program. BEM 230A.

A number of FIP clients have disabilities or live with a spouse or child(ren) with disabilities that may need accommodations to participate in assigned activities. BEM 230A. The needs of persons with disabilities are highly individual and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. BEM 230A. DHS must make reasonable efforts to ensure that persons with disability-related needs or limitations will have an effective and meaningful opportunity to benefit from DHS programs and services to the same extent as persons without disabilities. BEM 230A. Efforts to accommodate persons with disabilities may include modifications to program requirements, or extra help, as explained below. BEM 230A. Failure to recognize and accommodate disabilities undermines efforts to assist families in achieving self-sufficiency. BEM 230A.

Section 504 of the American Disability Act defines a “disability” as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or a history of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment. Examples of major life activities include: thinking, learning, taking care of oneself, maintaining social relationships, sleeping, communicating, etc. BEM 230A.

A disability that requires reasonable accommodation must be verified by an appropriate source, such as a doctor, psychologist, therapist, educator, etc. BEM 230A. A client may disclose a disability at any time. BEM 230A. Failure to disclose at an earlier time does not prevent the client from claiming a disability or requesting an accommodation in the future. BEM 230A.

Modifications or extra help may include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) reduced hours of required participation; (2) extended education allowances including more than 12 months allowed for vocational education; or (3) extended job search/job readiness time limit. BEM 230A.

When clients with verified disabilities are fully participating to their capability, they are counted as fully engaged in meeting work participation requirements regardless of the hours in which they are engaged, even if they do not meet federal work requirements. BEM 230A.

A person with long-term incapacity, or disability, may be deferred. BEM 230A. At intake, redetermination or anytime during an ongoing benefit period, when an individual claims to be disabled or indicates an inability to participate in work or the work participation program for more than 90 days because of a mental or physical condition, the client should be deferred. BEM 230A. Conditions include medical problems such as mental or physical injury, illness, impairment or learning disabilities. BEM 230A. This may include those who have applied for RSDI/SSI. BEM 230A.

When the Medical Review Team (MRT) decision and information is received, the Department must determine what accommodations the client needs to participate in the work participation program. BEM 230A. The person must pursue employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities and the Department must follow the procedure for accommodating disabilities. BEM 230A.

The Department must serve individuals who are determined work ready or work ready with limitations by the MRT when the individual cannot be served by the work participation program. BEM 230A. These clients have a mandatory participation status in Bridges. BEM 230A. The Department must assign self-sufficiency activities up to the medically permissible limit of the individual. BEM 230A. The Department should ask the work participation program to provide any test results or other documentation about the client's limitations at the time the client is referred back to DHS. BEM 230A.

When a client is determined by MRT to be work ready with limitations becomes noncompliant with the work participation program or his/her assigned activities, the Department shall follow the same instructions outlined in BEM 233A with regard to noncompliance.

An applicant, recipient or a member add is noncompliant if he or she, without good cause, fails or refuses to do any of the following: (1) appear and participate with the JET Program or other employment service provider; (2) complete a Family Automated Screening Tool (FAST), as assigned as the first step in the Family Self-Sufficiency Plan (FSSP) process; (3) develop a FSSP or a Personal Responsibility Plan and Family Contract (PRPFC); (4) comply with activities assigned to on the FSSP; (5) provide legitimate documentation of work participation; (6) appear for a scheduled appointment or meeting related to assigned activities; (7) participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities; (8) accept a job referral; (9) complete a job application; (10) appear for a job interview.<sup>2</sup> BEM 233A.

PATH participants will not be terminated from a PATH program without first scheduling a "triage" meeting with the client to jointly discuss noncompliance and good cause. BEM 233A. The department coordinates the process to notify the MWA case manager of triage meetings including scheduling guidelines. BEM 233A.

Clients can either attend a meeting or participate in a conference call if attendance at the triage meeting is not possible. BEM 233A. If a client calls to reschedule an already scheduled triage meeting, the client is offered a telephone conference at that time. BEM 233A. Clients must comply with triage requirement within the negative action period. BEM 233A.

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<sup>2</sup> The Department will not apply the three month, six month or lifetime penalty to ineligible caretakers, clients deferred for lack of child care and disqualified aliens. Failure to complete a FAST or FSSP results in closure due to failure to provide requested verification. Clients can reapply at any time. BEM 233A.

The Department is required to send a DHS-2444, Notice of Employment and/or Self-Sufficiency Related Noncompliance within three days after learning of the noncompliance which must include the date of noncompliance, the reason the client was determined to be noncompliant, the penalty that will be imposed and the triage date within the negative action period. BEM 233A.

**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.** A claim of good cause must be verified and documented for member adds and recipients. If it is determined at triage that the client has good cause, and good cause issues have been resolved, the client should be sent back to JET. BEM 233A. **Good cause should be determined based on the best information available during the triage and prior to the negative action date. Good cause may be verified by information already on file with DHS or MWA.** Good cause must be considered even if the client does not attend, with particular attention to possible disabilities (including disabilities that have not been diagnosed or identified by the client) and unmet needs for accommodation. BEM 233A.

Good cause may exist where: (1) the client is physically or mentally unfit for the job or activity, as shown by medical evidence or other reliable information,<sup>3</sup> (2) the client has a debilitating illness or injury, or a spouse or child's illness or injury requires in-home care by the client; or (3) the DHS, employment services provider, contractor, agency, or employer failed to make reasonable accommodations for the client's disability or the client's needs related to the disability. See BEM 233A.

The penalty for noncompliance without good cause is FIP closure. BEM 233A. Depending on the case situation, penalties include the following: (1) delay in eligibility at application; (2) ineligibility (denial or termination of FIP with no minimum penalty period); (3) case closure for a minimum of three months for the first episode of noncompliance, six months for the second episode of noncompliance and lifetime closure for the third episode of noncompliance. BEM 233A.

Although Claimant has medical issues, she is medically able to attend PATH. Claimant made no attempt to attend PATH. Good cause for noncompliance is not shown.

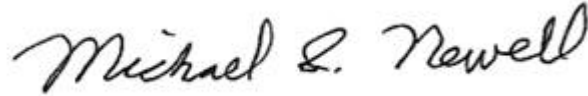
The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, finds that the Department acted in accordance with Department policy when it terminated FIP and sanctioned Claimant for PATH noncompliance.

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<sup>3</sup> This includes any disability-related limitations that preclude participation in a work and/or self-sufficiency-related activity. The disability-related needs or limitations may not have been identified or assessed prior to the noncompliance. BEM 233A.

**DECISION AND ORDER**

Accordingly, the Department's decision is **AFFIRMED**.



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Michael S. Newell  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: **7/14/2014**

Date Mailed: **7/14/2014**

MSN/las

**NOTICE OF APPEAL:** A party may appeal this Hearing Decision in the circuit court in the county in which he/she resides, or the circuit court in Ingham County, within 30 days of the receipt date.

A party may request a rehearing or reconsideration of this Hearing Decision from the Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS) within 30 days of the mailing date of this Hearing Decision, or MAHS may order a rehearing or reconsideration on its own motion.

MAHS may grant a party's Request for Rehearing or Reconsideration 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 party requesting a rehearing or reconsideration 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 this Hearing Decision is mailed.

A written request may be faxed or mailed to MAHS. If submitted by fax, 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

cc:

