

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 14-007234
Issue No.: 1008, 3008
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: August 20, 2014
County: St. Clair

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Darryl T. Johnson

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 August 20, 2014, from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included Claimant. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included PATH Coordinator [REDACTED]. Intern [REDACTED] observed from the ALJ's office with the consent of the other participants.

ISSUE

Did the Department properly close Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits and impose a lifetime sanction?

Did the Department properly reduce Claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits?

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 on-going FIP and FAP recipient.
2. Claimant was previously sanctioned at least twice in both the FIP and FAP programs.
3. The Medical Review Team (MRT) denied Claimant's request for a deferral from the PATH program. (Exhibit 1 Page 3.)
4. Claimant was instructed to appear for PATH on June 16 and June 23, 2014. (Exhibit 1 Pages 3-4.)

5. Claimant did not appear for either PATH appointment.
6. A Notice of Case Action (NCA) was mailed to Claimant on June 30, 2014, advising Claimant that her FIP would be closed, effective August 1, 2014. (Exhibit 1 Page 10.)
7. Another NCA was mailed to Claimant on July 11, 2014, informing her that her FAP would be reduced to [REDACTED], effective August 1, 2014. (Exhibit 1 Page 11.)
8. Notices were mailed to Claimant instructing her to participate in triage appointments on July 9 and July 23, 2014. (Exhibit 1 Pages 7-9.)
9. Claimant did not participate in either triage.
10. On July 9, 2014, the Department received Claimant's hearing request.

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, Pub. L. No. 104-193, and 42 USC 601 to 679c. The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FIP pursuant to 45 CFR 233-260, MCL 400.10, the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b, 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 273. The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FAP pursuant to MCL 400.10, the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3001 to .3015.

As stated in BEM 233A,

DHS requires clients to participate in employment and self-sufficiency-related activities and to accept employment when offered. The focus is to assist clients in removing barriers so they can participate in activities which lead to self-sufficiency. However, there are consequences for a client who refuses to participate, without good cause.

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. The goal is to bring the client into compliance.

If a client does not comply with self-sufficiency activities or work, they can be penalized:

As a condition of eligibility, all WEIs and non-WEIs must work or engage in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities. Noncompliance of applicants, recipients, or member adds means doing any of the following without good cause:

- Failing or refusing to:
 - Appear and participate with PATH or other employment service provider.
- * * *
- Provide legitimate documentation of work participation.
 - Appear for a scheduled appointment or meeting related to assigned activities.
 - Participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities.
 - Participate in required activity.

If a client does not comply, they can avoid penalties by showing they had good cause for non-compliance.

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. Document the good cause determination in Bridges and the FSSP under the Participation and Compliance tab.

If it is determined during triage the client has good cause, and good cause issues have been resolved, send the client back to PATH. There is no need for a new PATH referral.

BEM 233A lists a number of examples of good cause, but none of them are arguably applicable here. The Claimant admitted that she did not attend the PATH appointments or the triage meetings. Her explanation was that she does not get around very well, and she is only awake six to eight hours per day. She also admitted that she had been sanctioned twice previously for non-compliance.

The penalties for non-compliance are found at page 1 of BEM 233A:

A Work Eligible Individual (WEI) and non-WEIs (except ineligible grantees, clients deferred for lack of child care, and disqualified aliens), see BEM 228, who fails, without good cause, to participate in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, must be penalized. Depending on the case situation, penalties include the following:

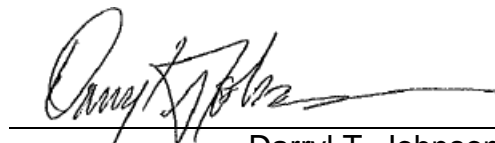
- Delay in eligibility at application.
- Ineligibility (denial or termination of FIP with no minimum penalty period).
- Case closure for a minimum of three months for the first episode of noncompliance, six months for the second episode of noncompliance and lifetime closure for the third episode of noncompliance.

Because the Claimant was subject to two sanctions previously, she was properly subject to the sanction imposed for a third episode of non-compliance in both the FIP and FAP programs.

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 closed Claimant's FIP and imposed a lifetime sanction for her third episode of non-compliance. It also acted in accordance with Department policy when it closed her FAP for six months, or until compliance, whichever is longer.

DECISION AND ORDER

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



Darryl T. Johnson
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: **8/22/2014**

Date Mailed: **8/22/2014**

DTJ / jaf

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:

