

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

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Reg. No.: 2014-434807
Issue No(s): 3005
Case No.: ██████████
Hearing Date: June 26, 2014
County: Jackson (00)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Zainab Baydoun

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 June 26, 2014 from Detroit, Michigan. The Department was represented by ██████████, 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 Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits that the Department is entitled to recoup?
2. Did the Department establish, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV)?
3. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving benefits for Food Assistance Program (FAP)?

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 April 15, 2014, to establish an OI of benefits received by Respondent as a result of Respondent having allegedly committed an IPV.
2. The OIG has requested that Respondent be disqualified from receiving program benefits.
3. Respondent was a recipient of FAP benefits issued by the Department.
4. Respondent was aware of the responsibility to report changes in circumstances to the Department, such as changes in residency..
5. Respondent did not have an 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 February 1, 2010 to March 31, 2014(fraud period).
7. During the fraud period, the Department alleges that Respondent was issued \$1745 in FAP benefits by the State of Michigan and that Respondent was entitled to \$0 in such benefits.
8. The Department alleges that Respondent received an OI in FAP benefits in the amount of \$1745.
9. This was Respondent's first alleged IPV.
10. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent at the last known address and 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 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.

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 \$1000 or more, **or**
 - the total OI amount is less than \$1000, **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 (May 2014), pp. 12-13.

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 (May 2014), p. 7; 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.

In this case, the Department alleges that Respondent committed an IPV of his FAP benefits because (i) he failed to notify the Department that he was incarcerated from December 9, 2009 to February 19, 2010 and from February 12, 2012 to April 28, 2012; and (ii) he failed to notify the Department that from September 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014, he no longer resided in Michigan but continued to receive and use Michigan-issued FAP benefits while out of state.

Clients must report changes in circumstances that potentially affect eligibility or benefit amount within ten days of the change. BAM 105 (October 2009 and December 2011) p.7. The Department testified that Respondent did not report his imprisonment to the Department and that he continued to be issued FAP benefits for which he was ineligible. The Department failed to present any documentary evidence supporting its testimony that Respondent was incarcerated from December 9, 2009 to February 19, 2010 and from February 12, 2012 to April 28, 2012. The Department argued that Respondent's FAP transaction history supports the periods of alleged imprisonment, as no purchases were made during the months at issue. This was insufficient to establish by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent withheld information concerning his alleged imprisonment for the purpose of maintaining his FAP eligibility. Thus, the Department has failed to establish that Respondent committed an IPV of his FAP benefits by failing to report his incarceration.

The Department also sought to establish that Respondent committed an IPV of his FAP benefits because he failed to notify the Department that he no longer resided in Michigan but continued to receive and use Michigan-issued FAP benefits while out of state. To be eligible for FAP benefits issued by the Department, an individual must be a Michigan resident. BEM 220 (July 2013 and February 2014), p. 1. A person is considered a resident while living in Michigan for any purpose other than a vacation, even if he has no intent to remain in the state permanently or indefinitely. BEM 220, p. 1. A client who resides outside the State of Michigan for more than thirty days is not eligible for FAP benefits issued by the State of Michigan. BEM 212 (July 2013 and February 2014), pp. 1-3.

The Department established that from July 3, 2013 to November 16, 2013, Respondent used FAP benefits issued to him by the State of Michigan exclusively out of state, in Florida. (Exhibit 1, pp. 28-30). While this evidence may be sufficient to establish that Respondent no longer resided in Michigan and was no longer eligible for FAP benefits, to establish an IPV, the Department must present clear and convincing evidence that Respondent **intentionally** withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of maintaining benefits.

In support of its contention that Respondent committed an IPV, the Department presented assistance applications that Respondent submitted to the Department on December 9, 2011 and December 6, 2012, on which he indicates he is homeless.

(Exhibit 1, pp. 33-73). While this may be may be sufficient to establish that Respondent was advised of his responsibility to report changes in circumstances, it does not establish, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent intentionally withheld information concerning his out-of-state move for the purpose of maintaining his Michigan FAP eligibility.

Based on the foregoing, the Department did not present sufficient evidence to establish Respondent's intent other than Respondent's out-of-state use. Therefore, in the absence of any clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld information concerning an out-of-state move for the purpose of maintaining Michigan FAP eligibility, the Department has failed to establish that Respondent committed an IPV of FAP benefits.

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 of an active group as long as he 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, p. 13. Refusal to repay will not cause denial of current or future MA if the client is otherwise eligible. BAM 710 (July 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 FAP concurrent receipt of benefits. BAM 720, p. 16.

In this case, the Department failed to satisfy its burden of showing that Respondent committed a FAP IPV. Therefore, Respondent is **not** subject to a disqualification from the FAP program.

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. The amount of the OI is the benefit amount the client actually received minus the amount the client was eligible to receive. BAM 720, p. 8; BAM 715 (May 2014), p. 6; BAM 705 (May 2014), p. 6.

The Department alleged that Respondent was overissued FAP benefits for the months of February 2010 and April 2012, based on his incarceration from December 9, 2009 to February 19, 2010 and from February 12, 2012 to April 28, 2012. Although clients are not eligible for FAP benefits while incarcerated, as discussed above the Department failed to present evidence of Respondent's incarceration. Therefore, the Department is not entitled to recoup the \$200 in FAP benefits issued to Respondent for February 2010 and the \$200 in FAP benefits issued to Respondent for April 2012.

At the hearing, the Department presented a FAP transaction history that established that Respondent used Michigan-issued FAP benefits out of state from July 3, 2013 to

November 16, 2013. Clients are not eligible for FAP benefits if they do not reside in Michigan. BEM 220, p. 1. In the absence of any contrary evidence, this established that Respondent did not reside in Michigan and was was not eligible for FAP benefits issued by the Department during this period.

The Department alleges that Respondent was overissued FAP benefits in the amount of \$1345 for the period between September 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014. The Department presented a benefit summary inquiry to support issuances during this period. (Exhibit 1, p.38).


Based on out-of-state use that began July 3, 2013, Department properly calculated the first month of the OI period to begin September 1, 2013. See BAM 720, p. 7. Because Respondent was issued \$1345 between September 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014, and Respondent was not eligible for any FAP benefits during this period, the Department is entitled to recoup or collect \$1345 from him. Although the FAP transaction history does not show purchases after November 16, 2013, FAP benefits continued to be issued to Respondent until March 2014. If any funds are remaining, the Department is to expunge the FAP benefits and apply towards Respondent's OI recoupment.

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. The Department has not established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV.
2. Respondent did receive an OI of program benefits in the amount of \$1345 from the FAP program.

The Department is ORDERED to initiate recoupment and/or collection procedures for the amount of \$1345 in accordance with Department policy.



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

Date Signed: July 16, 2014

Date Mailed: July 16, 2014

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.

ZB/tlf

cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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