

**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.: 14-005276
Issue No.: 3005
Case No.: ██████████
Hearing Date: August 14, 2014
County: Calhoun

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 August 14, 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 June 27, 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 residency to the Department.
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 April 1, 2013, to September 30, 2013 (fraud period).
7. During the fraud period, the Department alleges that Respondent was issued \$1200 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 \$1200.
9. This was Respondent's first alleged IPV.
10. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent at the last known address and was 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.

In this case, the Department alleged that Respondent committed an IPV because he continued to receive and use FAP benefits issued by the State of Michigan while out of state. Subsequent to the scheduling of the current hearing, the Notice of Hearing and accompanying documents were mailed to Respondent via first class mail at the address identified by the Department as the last known address. After the hearing, the notice and documents were returned by the United States Postal Service as undeliverable. When notice of a FAP IPV hearing is sent using first class mail and is returned as undeliverable, the hearing may still be held. 7 CFR 273.16((e)(3); BAM 720, p. 12. At the hearing, the Department established that the address it provided was the best available address for Respondent and that documents were mailed to Respondent at other addresses associated with his name, which were returned as undeliverable. Thus, the hearing properly proceeded with respect to the alleged FAP IPV.

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 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 (March 2013 and July 2013), 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 (November 2012 and July 2013), pp. 2-3.

The Department established that from February 13, 2013, to September 18, 2013, Respondent used FAP benefits issued to him by the State of Michigan exclusively out of state. (Exhibit 1, pp. 48-50). 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 an assistance application that Respondent submitted to the Department on October 17, 2012. (Exhibit 1, pp. 11-40). While this 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.

The Department did not present any evidence other than Respondent's out of state use to establish Respondent's intent. Although the information presented may establish that Respondent was no longer a MI resident, it is insufficient to establish that he had the intent to commit an IPV. Therefore, in the absence of any clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld or misrepresented his change in residence 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 FAP OI is the benefit amount the client actually received minus the amount the client was eligible to receive. BAM 720, p. 8; BAM 715 (July 2014), p. 6; BAM 705 (July 2014), p. 6.

Clients are not eligible for FAP benefits if they do not reside in Michigan. BEM 220, p. 1. At the hearing, the Department presented a FAP transaction history that established that Respondent used Michigan-issued FAP benefits out of state from February 13, 2013 to September 18, 2013. In the absence of any contrary evidence, this established that Respondent did not reside in Michigan and was was not eligible for any FAP benefits issued by the Department during this period.

In this case, the Department alleges that Respondent was overissued FAP benefits in the amount of \$1200 for the period between April 1, 2013 and September 30, 2013. The Department presented a benefit summary inquiry to support issuances during this period. (Exhibit 1, p.51). Because the Department properly calculated the first month of the OI period to begin April 1, 2013, (see BAM 720, p. 7) and established the amount issued during the fraud period, the Department is entitled to recoup or collect \$1200 from Respondent for FAP benefits it issued to Respondent between April 1, 2013 and September 30, 2013.

