

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 14-013829
Issue No.: 5001
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: February 11, 2015
County: Jackson

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Vicki Armstrong

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 following Claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, an in-person hearing was held on February 11, 2015, from Jackson, Michigan. Claimant, represented by [REDACTED] of [REDACTED], personally appeared and testified. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included Assistance Payment Supervisor [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Did the Department properly process Claimant's request for State Emergency Relief (SER) assistance with shelter emergency?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. On October 2, 2014, Claimant applied for SER assistance with shelter emergency.
2. On October 3, 2014, the Department sent Claimant a SER Decision Notice.
3. On October 13, 2014, Claimant's Authorized Hearing Representative (AHR) filed a hearing request, protesting the Department's SER decision.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The State Emergency Relief (SER) program is established by the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b. The SER program is administered by the Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) pursuant to MCL 400.10 and by Mich Admin Code, R 400.7001 through R 400.7049. Department policies are found in the Department of Human Services State Emergency Relief Manual (ERM).

SER does not assist a group who failed to use their available money to prevent a shelter, energy or utility emergency. A client-caused emergency is when an SER group fails to pay required payments for the six-month period prior to the month of application. ERM 204, p 1 (8/1/2014).

Applicants may file a State Emergency Relief (SER) application in any county in Michigan. An application may also be submitted electronically through the MIBridges. An application submitted through MIBridges for an SER covered service is considered a complete application. No additional applications are required. ERM 103, p 1, (10/1/2013).

The Department evaluates the payment history for the preceding six-month period to determine the required payment criteria. Required payments are actual shelter costs or required energy and/or utility payments as outlined in ERM 301 & ERM 302. Required payments are determined based on the group members in the home during the required payment period. Required payments include the deceased if alive during the required payment period. ERM 204, p 1 (8/1/2014).

Good cause may exist as a basis for an applicant's failure to prevent an emergency. Establish good cause for the following services:

- Relocation services.
- Home ownership services (except property taxes).
- Energy services.
- Utility services. ERM 204, p 1 (8/1/2014).

Good cause for failure to meet obligations for shelter, energy, or utilities exists if:

- The SER group's net countable income from all sources during each month the group failed to pay their obligations was less than the amount shown for the SER group size in the good cause table in this item.
- The income was not reduced by a disqualification of SSI or department benefits for failure to comply with a program requirement.

Note: This includes income of people who were in the group during the required payment period. ERM 204, p 2 (8/1/2014).

Housing affordability is a condition of eligibility for State Emergency Relief (SER) and applies only to Relocation Services (ERM 303) and Home Ownership Services and Home Repairs (ERM 304). Housing affordability does not apply to other SER services. ERM 207, p 1, (3/1/2013).

In this item, total housing obligation means the total amount the SER group must pay for rent, house payment, mobile home lot rent, property taxes and required insurance premiums. Renters can have a higher total housing obligation if heat, electricity and/or water/cooking gas are included. ERM 207, p 1, (3/1/2013).

The Department will authorize SER for services only if the SER group has sufficient income to meet ongoing housing expenses. An SER group that cannot afford to pay their ongoing housing costs plus any utility obligations will not be able to retain their housing, even if SER is authorized.

The Department will deny SER if the group does not have sufficient income to meet their total housing obligation. The total housing obligation cannot exceed 75 percent of the group's total net countable income. ERM 207, p 1, (3/1/2013).

The in-person interview is waived for applicants who are active for another DHS program or have applied online through MIBridges; **however a phone interview is required** and the Individual Interviewed screen must be completed for each SER application. ERM 103, p 5 (10/1/2013).

In this case, a phone interview was never conducted by the Department. Claimant contends that she was on unpaid medical leave at the time of application and had been on medical leave, and that the calculations performed by the Department did not take into account her true circumstances.

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 did not act in accordance with Department policy when it issued its SER Decision Notice.

DECISION AND ORDER

Accordingly, the Department's SER 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. Redetermine Claimant's eligibility for SER application dated 10/2/2014, after conducting a phone interview in accord with policy.



Vicki Armstrong
Administrative Law Judge
for Nick Lyon, Interim Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: **3/2/2015**

Date Mailed: **3/2/2015**

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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 48909-8139

cc:

