

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2014-24099
Issue No(s): 1008, 2000, 3000
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: February 25, 2014
County: Saginaw

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 February 25, 2014, from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included the Claimant, [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included Eligibility Specialist [REDACTED].

ISSUES

Did the Department properly:

- a. Close Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP – Cash) benefits?
- b. Close Claimant's Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits?
- c. Close Claimant's Medical Assistance (MA) 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 recipient of FIP, FAP, MA benefits.
2. The Department mailed a Verification of Employment form to Claimant, requiring her to verify her bank account by December 30, 2013.
3. The Department closed her FAP and MA when it concluded she had not provided the required document by the due date but, when it later confirmed that it had received it timely, it restored her FAP and MA on January 10, 2014.

4. Claimant was scheduled to attend orientation for the Partnership Accountability Training Hope (PATH) program on December 30, 2013. See the PATH Appointment Notice dated December 19, 2013 (Exhibit 1 Pages 14-15)
5. The Department granted Claimant's request to attend PATH orientation on January 6, 2014.
6. Claimant did not attend orientation on January 6, 2014
7. The Department sent Claimant a Notice of Case Action (NCA) on January 7, 2014 informing her that her FIP was being closed because she had not verified her bank account.
8. On January 14, 2014 the Department received a Hearing Request from Claimant, asking for a hearing on the issues of FIP, FAP, and MA.

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.

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 271.1 to 285.5. The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FAP pursuant to MCL 400.10 and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3001 to .3015.

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by the Title XIX of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396-1396w-5, and is implemented by 42 CFR 400.200 to 1008.59. The Department of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the MA program pursuant to MCL 400.10 and MCL 400.105.

As a preliminary issue, the Claimant requested a hearing regarding her MA, FIP and FAP. It will be noted that, although negative action was taken regarding her MA and FAP the Department has restored those benefits without any loss. Therefore those issues are moot.

Claimant testified during the hearing that she no longer disagrees with the Department's action in terminating her FIP benefits. Therefore, the Administrative Law Judge finds that the Department acted in accordance with Department policy when it closed her FIP benefits.

"Clients must cooperate with the local office in determining initial and ongoing eligibility. This includes completion of necessary forms; see Refusal to Cooperate Penalties in this item. Clients must completely and truthfully answer all questions on forms and in interviews." BAM 105.

Per BAM 130, at page 6, says:

Verifications are considered to be timely if received by the date they are due. For electronically transmitted verifications (fax, email or Mi Bridges document upload), the date of the transmission is the receipt date. Verifications that are submitted after the close of regular business hours through the drop box or by delivery of a DHS representative are considered to be received the next business day.

Send a negative action notice when:

The client indicates refusal to provide a verification, **or**

The time period given has elapsed and the client has **not** made a reasonable effort to provide it.

The issue is whether the Claimant provided timely verification in response to the request. The evidence is persuasive that the Verification Checklist was mailed to the Claimant at her address of record. The evidence also establishes that the Claimant did not fully respond by the deadline.

Much of the testimony during the hearing focused on the Claimant's reported non-compliance with PATH. The PATH program requirements including education and training opportunities are found in 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. A Work Eligible Individual (WEI) who refuses, without good cause, to participate in assigned employment and/or other self-sufficiency related activities is subject to penalties. If the client does not return the activity log by the due date, it is treated as a noncompliance; see BEM 233A. When a FAP recipient is non-compliant, BEM 233B establishes several consequences."

If a participant is active FIP and FAP at the time of FIP noncompliance, determination of FAP good cause is based on the FIP good cause reasons outlined in BEM 233A. For the FAP determination, if the client does not meet one of the FIP good cause reasons, determine the FAP disqualification based on FIP deferral criteria only as outlined in BEM 230A, or the FAP deferral reason of care of a child under 6 or education. No other deferral reasons apply for participants active FIP and FAP.

Determine good cause during triage appointment/phone conference and prior to the negative action period. Good cause must be provided prior to the end of the negative action period.

“Determine good cause during triage and prior to the negative action effective date. Good cause must be verified and provided prior to the end of the negative action period and can be based on information already on file with the DHS or PATH.” BEM 233A p 11 (7/1/13).

Per BEM 233A, “good cause for non-compliance” are based on factors beyond control of the client. Some circumstances that are considered “good cause” are: working 40 hours or more; client is unfit for a particular job; illness or injury; lack of child care; lack of transportation; unplanned events; long commute. “If it is determined during triage the client has good cause, and good cause issues have been resolved, send the client back to PATH.”

What is missing is any evidence, other than the testimony, to show that negative action was taken because Claimant did not participate in the PATH orientation. The only NCA provided is found in Exhibit 1 Pages 4-11. The reason given for Claimant’s FIP, FAP, and MA being closed was because, “Verification of Bank Account Checking (BEM 400) was not returned for” Claimant. Nothing is mentioned in the NCA that ties the Department’s decision to her non-participation in PATH. Inasmuch as the Department conceded that her FAP and MA had to be restored once it found her verification, it should also have restored her FIP for the same reason.

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 reduced Claimant’s FIP for January 2014. The issues of FAP and MA having been found moot, no decision is made with respect to those issues.

DECISION AND ORDER

Accordingly, the Department's decision is **REVERSED** with respect to Claimant's FIP.

THE DEPARTMENT IS ORDERED TO BEGIN DOING THE FOLLOWING, IN HEARING DECISION, WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE DATE OF MAILING OF THIS DECISION AND ORDER:

1. Redetermine Claimant's FIP benefit eligibility, for the month of January 1, 2014;
2. Issue a supplement to Claimant for any benefits improperly not issued.



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

Date Signed: February 27, 2014

Date Mailed: February 27, 2014

NOTICE OF APP EAL: The claimant may appeal the Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the receipt of the Decision and Order or, if a timely Request for Rehearing or Reconsideration was made, within 30 days of the receipt date of the Decision and Order of Reconsideration or Rehearing Decision.

Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS) may order a rehearing or reconsideration on either its own motion or at the request of a party within 30 days of the mailing date of this Decision and Order. MAHS will not order a rehearing or reconsideration on the Department's motion where the final decision cannot be implemented within 90 days of the filing of the original request (60 days for FAP cases).

A Request for Rehearing or Reconsideration may be granted 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 Department, AHR or the claimant 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 the hearing decision is mailed.

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

DTJ/las

cc:

