

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 2014-31411
Issue No.: 2007, 3002, 4007
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: April 3, 2014
County: Ionia

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: C. Adam Purnell

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 April 3, 2014 from Lansing, Michigan. Claimant personally appeared and provided testimony. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED] (Eligibility Specialist) and [REDACTED] (Assistance Payments Supervisor).

ISSUES

Did the Department properly deny Claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA) case and State Disability Assistance (SDA) after Claimant requested that his application for these programs be withdrawn?

Did the Department properly deny Claimant's application for Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits because Claimant failed to comply with the verification requirements?

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 applied for FAP, MA and SDA on January 21, 2014.
2. On January 23, 2014, the Department mailed Claimant a Verification Checklist (DHS-3503) which requested verification of his wages from the past 30 days, loss of employment and home rent due by February 3, 2014.
3. On January 23, 2014, the Department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action (DHS-1605) which denied his application for FIP and MA because he requested his assistance be stopped. The Department approved Claimant's FAP effective January 21, 2014 through January 31, 2014 for \$ [REDACTED] per month and approved his FAP for February 1, 2014 through February 28, 2014 at \$ [REDACTED] per month.

4. On February 11, 2014, the Department mailed Claimant a Notice of Case Action (DHS-1605) which closed Claimant's FAP case effective March 1, 2014 because he failed to turn in verification for loss of employment, rent expense, and earned income payment.
5. On March 7, 2014, Claimant requested a hearing to dispute the closure of his FAP, FIP and MA cases.

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 State Disability Assistance (SDA) program is established by the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b. The Department of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10 and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3151-.3180.

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.

Department policy indicates the appropriate procedure to follow when a client requests that a program be withdrawn. When a program is withdrawn, enter the reason on the program request screen in Bridges. BAM 110 (1-1-2014), p 22.

For all programs (except State Emergency Relief (SER)), when a recipient is no longer eligible **or requests case closure**, do all of the following:

- Enter all appropriate information, including verification sources, in Bridges to document ineligibility, or the client's request that the program(s) be closed.
- Run EDBC in Bridges and certify the eligibility results.
- Make appropriate referrals for other programs or services. BAM 220, pp 19-20 (1-1-2014) (With emphasis added).

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.

Clients who are able but refuse to provide necessary information or take a required action are subject to penalties. BAM 105, p 18. Clients must take actions within their ability to obtain verifications. BAM 130 and BEM 702 (1-1-2014). Verification means documentation or other evidence to establish the accuracy of the client's verbal or written statements. BAM 130. Verification is usually required upon application or redetermination and for a reported change affecting eligibility or benefit level. BAM 130.

Verifications are considered timely if received by the date they are due. BAM 130. For FAP, the department must allow a client 10 calendar days (or other time limit specified in policy) to provide the requested verification. BAM 130. Should the client indicate a refusal to provide a verification or, conversely, if the time period given has elapsed and the client has not made a reasonable effort to provide it, the department may send the client a negative action notice. BAM 130.

The Department worker must tell the client what verification is required, how to obtain it, and the due date. BAM 130. The Department sometimes will utilize a verification checklist (VCL) or a DHS form telling clients what is needed to determine or redetermine eligibility. See Bridges Program Glossary (BPG) at page 47.

Here, the Department contends that Claimant verbally requested during an interview that his pending application for MA and SDA be withdrawn. The Department further contends that Claimant's FAP case was closed because he failed to provide verifications concerning his loss of employment. (According to the Department, Claimant reported during the interview that that he had recently been terminated from his employment at Hull Dairy.) Claimant did not dispute the Department regarding his request to withdraw his application for MA and SDA benefits. However, Claimant contends that he was frustrated as it was difficult and overly burdensome to comply with the Department's verification requests. Claimant stated that he had only later found the requested verifications from [REDACTED], but that it was after February 11, 2014.

Testimony and other evidence must be weighed and considered according to its reasonableness. *Gardiner v Courtright*, 165 Mich 54, 62; 130 NW 322 (1911); *Dep't of Community Health v Risch*, 274 Mich App 365, 372; 733 NW2d 403 (2007). The weight and credibility of this evidence is generally for the fact-finder to determine. *Dep't of Community Health*, 274 Mich App at 372; *People v Terry*, 224 Mich App 447, 452; 569 NW2d 641 (1997). Moreover, it is for the fact-finder to gauge the demeanor and veracity of the witnesses who appear before him, as best he is able. See, e.g., *Caldwell v Fox*, 394 Mich 401, 407; 231 NW2d 46 (1975); *Zeeland Farm Services, Inc v JBL Enterprises, Inc*, 219 Mich App 190, 195; 555 NW2d 733 (1996).

This Administrative Law Judge has carefully considered and weighed the testimony and other evidence in the record. The Department acted properly when it allowed Claimant to withdraw his pending application for MA and SDA. With regard to FAP, Claimant did not challenge the Department's assertion that he failed to turn over verification of his loss of employment from [REDACTED] by the February 3, 2014 due date. In addition, the record shows that the Department properly documented Claimant's request to withdraw these programs from his pending application. There was no reason that the Department should not honor Claimant's request. During the communication process, Claimant had

a reasonable opportunity to contact his caseworker and ask for assistance with the FAP loss of employment verification requests. Alternatively, Claimant could have requested an extension of time to provide the verifications. However, Claimant chose neither option.

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 MA, SDA and FAP cases.

DECISION AND ORDER

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

IT IS SO ORDERED.



C. Adam Purnell
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: April 16, 2014

Date Mailed: April 17, 2014

NOTICE OF APPEAL: 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

CAP/las

cc:

