

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

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████████████████████
████████████████████

Reg. No.: 14-010889
Issue No.: 3005
Case No.: ██████████
Hearing Date: May 6, 2015
County: WAYNE-DISTRICT 17
(GREENFIELD/JOY)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Eric Feldman

HEARING DECISION FOR INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION

Upon the request for a hearing by the Department of Health and Human Services (Department or DHHS), 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 45 CFR 235.110; and with Mich Admin Code, R 400.3130 and 400.3178. After due notice, a three-way telephone hearing was held on May 6, 2015, from Detroit, Michigan. The Department was represented by ██████████, Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Participants on behalf of Respondent included Respondent, ██████████ and Respondent's witness, ██████████

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 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 September 12, 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 residence.
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 FAP fraud period is May 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013 (fraud period).
7. During the fraud period, Respondent was issued [REDACTED] in FAP benefits by the State of Michigan, and the Department alleges that Respondent was entitled to \$0.00 in such benefits during this time period.
8. The Department alleges that Respondent received an OI in FAP benefits in the amount of [REDACTED]
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.
11. On August 22, 2014, Respondent signed a request for an Administrative Disqualification Hearing. See Exhibit 1, p. 87.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Department policies are contained in the Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), Adult Services Manual (ASM), and Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

The Food Assistance Program (FAP) [formerly known as the Food Stamp program] is established by the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, 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 Department of Human Services) 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.

To be eligible, a person must be a Michigan resident. BEM 220 (March 2013), p. 1. For FAP cases, a person is considered a resident while living in Michigan for any purpose other than a vacation, even if there is no intent to remain in the state permanently or indefinitely. BEM 220, p. 1. Eligible persons may include persons who entered the state with a job commitment or to seek employment; and students (for FAP only, this includes students living at home during a school break). BEM 220, p. 1. For FAP cases, a person who is temporarily absent from the group is considered living with the group. BEM 212 (November 2012), p. 2. However, a person's absence is not temporary if it has lasted more than thirty days. BEM 212, p. 2.

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.

First, the Department presented Respondent's FAP transaction history. See Exhibit 1, pp. 10-18. The FAP transaction history showed that from April 5, 2013 to November 18, 2013, Respondent used FAP benefits issued by the State of Michigan out-of-state in Georgia. See Exhibit 1, pp. 11-14. Then, Respondent's FAP transaction history showed usage in the State of Michigan from January 5, 2014 to August 9, 2014. See Exhibit 1, pp. 15-18.

Second, the Department presented Respondent's LexisNexis history. See Exhibit 1, pp. 21-27.

Third, the Department presented Respondent's application dated March 16, 2014 and June 18, 2014, to show that he acknowledged his responsibility to report changes as required. See Exhibit 1, pp. 28-85.

Fourth, the Department presented Respondent's case comments history in which the Respondent stated to the DHHS caseworker that he was in Georgia. See Exhibit 1, p. 86. On April 16, 2014, the DHHS caseworker noted that Respondent informed DHHS that he was in Georgia for three months. See Exhibit 1, p. 86 (see also case comments for March 17, 2014).

At the hearing, Respondent argued that he did not intentionally commit an IPV of his FAP benefits and there was no dispute that he used his Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card in Georgia. On or around April of 2013, the witness testified that Respondent was offered an opportunity to earn some money by him helping move his former girlfriend's parents in Georgia. However, the Respondent/witness indicated that when the former girlfriend and Respondent arrived in Georgia, the former girlfriend intended to stay in Georgia to the surprise of the Respondent. Respondent/witness argued that he did not want to reside in Georgia and his intent was to return to Michigan; however, he did not have any money to travel back. Respondent testified that he stayed with the former girlfriend/parents home and a hotel room until he saved

enough money so he could return to Michigan. The witness testified that Respondent purchased a bus ticket, where she picked him up in Michigan on December 22, 2013.

Based on the foregoing information and evidence, the Department has failed to establish that Respondent committed an IPV of FAP benefits.

First, the Department did not present evidence to establish Respondent's intent during the alleged IPV usage, other than the LexisNexis report and the FAP transaction history. However, this failed to show by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld information concerning an out of state move during the alleged fraud period.

Second, even though the Respondent had exclusive out-of-state usage for almost eight months, both the Respondent/witness provided credible testimony that Respondent never intended to be a Georgia resident and that he intended to return to Michigan. Both the Respondent/witness credibility is supported by the fact that they both provided similar testimony as to the events that led to the Respondent temporarily staying in Georgia and the means by which he finally was able to return to Michigan. In fact, Respondent's FAP transaction history supports his claim that he wanted to return to Michigan as he began conducting exclusive usage in Michigan on January 5, 2014, ongoing. See Exhibit 1, pp. 15-18. Department policy does not prohibit out-of-state usage when the individual intends on coming back. Respondent demonstrated that he was a resident of Michigan during the alleged fraud period and only purchased food items in Georgia because of his monetary inability to return to Michigan. See BEM 220, p. 1. The Department failed to show by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld information concerning an out-of-state move for the purpose of maintaining Michigan FAP eligibility and therefore, the Department has failed to establish that Respondent committed an IPV of FAP benefits.

Disqualification

A client who is found to have committed an IPV by a court or hearing decision is disqualified from receiving program benefits. BAM 720, pp. 15-16; BEM 708 (April 2014), p. 1. Clients are disqualified for ten years for a FAP IPV involving concurrent receipt of benefits, and, for all other IPV cases involving FIP, FAP or SDA, for standard disqualification periods of one year for the first IPV, two years for the second IPV, and lifetime for the third IPV. BAM 720, p. 16. CDC clients who intentionally violate CDC program rules are disqualified for six months for the first occurrence, twelve months for the second occurrence, and lifetime for the third occurrence. BEM 708, p. 1. 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. 16.

In this case, the Department has not satisfied its burden of showing that Respondent committed an IPV concerning FAP benefits. Therefore, Respondent is not disqualified from FAP benefits for 12 months. BAM 720, p. 16.

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 group or provider actually received minus the amount the group was eligible to receive. BAM 720, p. 8.

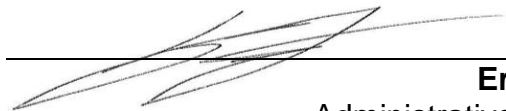
In this case, the Department has failed to satisfy its burden of showing that Respondent did receive a FAP OI in the amount of \$1,578 for the period of May 1, 2013 to December 31, 2013. See Exhibit 1, p. 3. As stated in the previous analysis, Department policy does not prohibit out-of-state usage when the individual intends on coming back. Respondent demonstrated that he was a Michigan residence during the alleged fraud/OI period. Therefore, the Department has failed to satisfy its burden of showing that Respondent committed an IPV concerning FAP benefits and there is no OI present in this case.

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 not** receive an OI of program benefits in the amount of [REDACTED] from the FAP benefits.

The Department is ORDERED to delete the OI and cease any recoupment action.



Eric Feldman
Administrative Law Judge
for Nick Lyon, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

Date Signed: **5/8/2015**

Date Mailed: **5/8/2015**
EJF/tm

NOTICE: The law provides that within 30 days of receipt of the above Hearing Decision, the Respondent may appeal it to the circuit court for the county in which he/she lives or the circuit court in Ingham County. A copy of the claim or application for appeal must be filed with the Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS).

