

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 15-004636
Issue No.: 1008
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: May 06, 2015
County: Oakland-District 3

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Kevin Scully

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, telephone hearing was held on May 06, 2015, from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included [REDACTED] and her authorized hearing representative [REDACTED] of the [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Whether the Department of Health and Human Services (Department) properly sanctioned the Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) case for noncompliance with employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. The Claimant was an ongoing Family Independence Program (FIP) recipient until April 1, 2015.
2. The Department referred the Claimant to the Partnership Accountability Training Hope (PATH) program as a condition of receiving FIP benefits.
3. The Department temporarily deferred the Claimant from participation in the PATH program through January 2, 2015.
4. On December 19, 2014, the Department sent the Claimant a Medical Determination Verification Checklist (DHS-3503-MRT) with a due date of December 29, 2014.
5. The Claimant was found to be noncompliant with the PATH program when she failed to reengage in programming by February 6, 2015.

6. The Department conducted a triage meeting on February 24, 2015.
7. On February 17, 2015, the Department notified the Claimant that it would sanction her FIP benefits as of April 1, 2015.
8. The Department received the Claimant's request for a hearing on March 20, 2014, protesting the sanctioning of her FIP benefits.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Family Independence Program (FIP) was established pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-193, and 42 USC 601 to 679c. The Department (formerly known as the Department of Human Services) administers FIP pursuant to 45 CFR 233-260, MCL 400.10, the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3101-.3131.

Federal and state laws require each work eligible individual (WEI) in the FIP group to participate in Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) or other employment-related activity unless temporarily deferred or engaged in activities that meet participation requirements. These clients must participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities to increase their employability and obtain employment. PATH is administered by the Workforce Development Agency, State of Michigan through the Michigan one-stop service centers. PATH serves employers and job seekers for employers to have skilled workers and job seekers to obtain jobs that provide economic self-sufficiency. PATH case managers use the One-Stop Management Information System (OSMIS) to record the clients' assigned activities and participation. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 230A (January 1, 2015), p 1.

A WEI who refuses, without good cause, to participate in assigned employment and/or other self-sufficiency related activities is subject to penalties. BEM 230A, p 1.

Noncompliance of applicants, recipients, or member adds means doing any of the following without good cause:

- Failing or refusing to:
 - Appear and participate with PATH or other employment service provider.
 - Appear for a scheduled appointment or meeting related to assigned activities.
 - Participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities.
- Participate in required activity. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 233A (October 1, 2014), pp 2-3.

Good cause is a valid reason for noncompliance with employment and/ or self-sufficiency related activities that are based on factors that are beyond the control of the noncompliant person. A claim of good cause must be verified and documented for member adds and recipients. BEM 233A, pp 3-4.

Good cause should be determined based on the best information available during the triage and prior to the negative action date. Good cause may be verified by information already on file with DHS or MWA. Good cause must be considered even if the client does not attend, with particular attention to possible disabilities (including disabilities that have not been diagnosed or identified by the client) and unmet needs for accommodation. BEM 233A.

Good cause includes the following:

Illness or Injury: The client has a debilitating illness or injury, or a spouse or child's illness or injury requires in-home care by the client.

Reasonable Accommodation: The DHS, employment services provider, contractor, agency, or employer failed to make reasonable accommodations for the client's disability or the client's needs related to the disability.

Unplanned Event or Factor: Credible information indicates an unplanned event or factor which likely prevents or significantly interferes with employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities. Unplanned events or factors include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Domestic violence.
- Health or safety risk.
- Religion.
- Homelessness.
- Jail.
- Hospitalization.

The penalty for noncompliance without good cause is FIP EDG closure. Effective October 1, 2011, the following minimum penalties apply:

- For the individual's first occurrence of noncompliance, Bridges closes the FIP EDG for not less than three calendar months.
- For the individual's second occurrence of noncompliance, Bridges closes the FIP EDG for not less than six calendar months.
- For the individual's third occurrence of noncompliance, Bridges closes the FIP EDG for a lifetime sanction. BEM 233A.

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. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 233B (July 1, 2013), p 2.

A noncompliant person must serve a minimum one-month or six-month Food Assistance Program (FAP) disqualification period unless one of the criteria for ending a disqualification early exists. BEM 233B, p 10.

The Claimant was an ongoing Family Independence Program (FIP) recipient until April 1, 2015, and the Department had mandated participation in the PATH program as a condition of receiving FIP benefits. The Claimant was noncompliant with the PATH program when she failed to reengage in programming by February 6, 2015. The Claimant had been temporarily deferred from the PATH program, but this deferral ended after the Claimant failed to respond to a request for additional medical documentation sent to her on December 19, 2014. The Department conducted a triage meeting on February 24, 2015, where the Claimant was given the opportunity to establish good cause for noncompliance with the PATH program. The Claimant did not attend the triage meeting and the Department did not find good cause. On February 17, 2015, the Department notified the Claimant that it would close her FIP benefits effective April 1, 2015.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Department provided the Claimant with an opportunity to provide the Department with evidence necessary to continue her temporary deferral from participation in the PATH program, but that she failed to provide the Department with sufficient supporting documentation by December 29, 2014. Therefore, the Department was acting in accordance with policy when it required the Claimant to reengage the PATH program.

The Claimant argued that she is a victim of domestic violence. The Claimant testified that as a result of this domestic violence, she suffers from severe and chronic injuries that prevent her from performing work related tasks and are a barrier to her participation in the PATH program. The Claimant testified that as a result of the domestic violence she lacks stable housing for herself because of her efforts to prevent her attacker from locating her and her children.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Department was aware of the Claimant's experiences with domestic violence, her medical problems, and her unstable housing at the time of the triage meeting. The Department failed to provide notes from the triage meeting or witnesses with direct knowledge of what was discussed during the triage meeting, which presumably was held in the Claimant's absence as directed by BEM 233A.

The Claimant testified that as a result of her unstable housing she did not receive notification of the triage meeting. The Claimant was allowed to present evidence at her hearing supporting her claim of good cause.

The Claimant provided documentation from her children's school that she had been receiving assistance from the school for homeless families. The Claimant provided documentation from a treating physician that she had been treated for her impairments on December 8, 2014. A treating physician determined that the Claimant was ill and unable to work as of December 6, 2014, for an unspecified period of time.


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 Claimant failed to provide sufficient evidence of good cause barriers to her participation in the PATH program as of February 6, 2015. The Department accepted the treating physician's assessment of her medical condition prior to that, but the Claimant failed to provide updated medical documentation as verification of her ongoing condition. Homelessness was a barrier to the Claimant's participation in the PATH program, but the evidence supports a finding that she was receiving assistance and was able to overcome this barrier. This Claimant failed to provide documentation that homeless was a barrier to her participation in PATH that she was unable to overcome.

The Department's determination that the Claimant was noncompliant with the PATH program without good cause is reasonable. The Department has established that it was acting in accordance with policy when it sanctioned the Claimant's benefits for noncompliance with self-sufficiency related activities.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the Department acted in accordance with policy when it sanctioned the Claimant's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits for noncompliance with the Partnership. Accountability Training. Hope. (PATH) program.

Accordingly, the Department's decision is **AFFIRMED**. It is SO ORDERED.



Kevin Scully
Administrative Law Judge
for Nick Lyon, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

Date Signed: **5/12/2015**

Date Mailed: **5/12/2015**

KS/las

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:

