

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 15-003159  
Issue No.: 3005  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: July 16, 2015  
County: WAYNE-DISTRICT 76

**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 telephone hearing was held on July 16, 2015, from Detroit, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Respondent did not appear at the hearing and it was held in Respondent's absence pursuant to 7 CFR 273.16(e), Mich Admin Code R 400.3130(5), or Mich Admin Code R 400.3178(5).

**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 [REDACTED], 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 income and group composition.
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 fraud period is [REDACTED] (fraud period).
7. During the fraud period, Respondent was issued \$1,158 in FAP benefits by the State of Michigan, and the Department alleges that Respondent was entitled to \$0 in such benefits during this time period.
8. The Department alleges that Respondent received an OI in FAP benefits in the amount of \$1,158.
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.

### **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.

Effective October 1, 2014, the Department's OIG requests IPV hearings for the following cases:

- Willful overpayments of \$500.00 or more under the AHH program.

- FAP trafficking overissuances 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 amount for the FIP, SDA, CDC, MA and FAP programs combined is \$500 or more, or
  - the total amount is less than \$500, 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 (October 2014), pp. 12-13; ASM 165 (May 2013), pp. 1-7.

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.

Clients must report changes in circumstance that potentially affect eligibility or benefit amount. BAM 105 (January 2014), p. 9. Changes must be reported within 10 days of receiving the first payment reflecting the change. BAM 105, p. 9.

Income reporting requirements are limited to the following:

- Earned income:
  - Starting or stopping employment.
  - Changing employers.
  - Change in rate of pay.
  - Change in work hours of more than five hours per week that is expected to continue for more than one month.

BAM 105, p. 9.

Parents and their children under 22 years of age who live together must be in the same group regardless of whether the child(ren) have their own spouse or child who lives with the group. BEM 212 (October 2013), p. 1.

In this case, the Department alleges that Respondent committed an IPV of his FAP benefits because he failed to report his employment and wages to the Department, which caused an overissuance of FAP benefits. Moreover, the Department alleged that Respondent committed an IPV because he failed to inform the Department that he resided with his mother. See BEM 212, p. 1.

Furthermore, the Department alleges that Respondent received an OI amount of \$1,158 during the alleged fraud period. See Exhibit A, p. 4. 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 establishing the OI amount, the Department presented Respondent's FAP budgets for the period of January 2014 to July 2014. See Exhibit A, pp. 32-46. A review of the FAP budgets found them to be inaccurate. In this case, the Department budgeted Respondent's income by taking the monthly average from his quarterly earnings. For example, Respondent's wage match reported his total earnings for the first quarter of 2014 (January thru March) to be \$3,226.50. See Exhibit A, p. 29. As a result, the Department calculated Respondent's monthly income from January 2014 to March 2014 to be \$1,076 (rounded-up) (\$3,226.50 divided by 3 months).

Policy states if improper reporting or budgeting of income caused the overissuance, the Department uses actual income for the overissuance month for that income source. BAM 720, p. 10. The Department converts all income to a monthly amount. BAM 720, p. 10. Exception, for FAP only, do not convert the averaged monthly income reported on a wage match. BAM 720, p. 10. Any income properly budgeted in the issuance budget remains the same in that month's corrected budget. BAM 720, p. 10.

Based on the above policy, the Department is unable to use Respondent's wage match as a method in determining his budgetable income for each overissuance month. See BAM 720, p. 10. Respondent's wage match fails to provide the actual income Respondent received each overissuance month because it only reports his quarterly earnings, not monthly earnings. The Department failed to provide any other verifications to show the actual income Respondent received for each overissuance month (i.e., payroll stubs). Because the Department failed to establish that it properly budgeted Respondent's income in the OI budgets, the Department did not satisfy its burden of showing that Respondent's received an OI for FAP benefits. See BAM 700, p. 1 and BAM 720, pp. 1, 8, and 10.

Furthermore, an IPV requires that an OI exist. Department policy states that suspected IPV means an OI exists for which all three of the following conditions exist as stated above. See BAM 700, p. 7; BAM 720, p. 1. Moreover, the Bridges Policy Glossary (BPG) defines IPV as a benefit overissuance resulting from the willful withholding of information or other violation of law or regulation by the client or his authorized representative. BPG 2014-015 (July 2014), p. 36. Department policy clearly states that a suspected IPV means an OI has to exist. See BAM 700, p. 7; BAM 720, p. 1; and BPG 2014-015, p. 36. Because the Department cannot establish an OI in this case, it cannot establish by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV of her FAP program. Thus, Respondent is not subject to a disqualification from the FAP program. See BAM 720, pp. 12 and 16.

It should be noted that the Department also failed to establish by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV of his FAP benefits. First, the Department argued that Respondent committed an IPV because he failed to inform the Department that he resided with his mother. This would result in Respondent's group size increasing to two (Respondent plus mother). See BEM 212, p. 1. However, the Department's evidence/testimony fails to show that Respondent in fact resides with his mother. As such, the Department failed to show by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld his group composition information (i.e., residing with his mother) for the purpose of maintaining Michigan FAP eligibility. Second, the Department argued that Respondent committed an IPV of his FAP benefits because he failed to report his employment and wages to the Department. In this case, the Department presented Respondent's application dated [REDACTED]. See Exhibit A, pp. 12-21. In the application, Respondent did not report any income, even though the Department argued that he was employed at the time. See Exhibit A, pp. 16-17. However, Respondent's wage match fails to report if he in fact received income in

January 2014 (month of application) because the wage match only reports income on a quarterly basis. See Exhibit A, p. 29. Therefore, in the absence of any clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld or misrepresented the income information for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing or preventing reduction of his FAP program benefits or eligibility, the Department has failed to establish that Respondent committed an IPV of FAP benefits.

**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 \$1,158 from the FAP benefits.

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



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

Date Signed: **7/21/2015**

Date Mailed: **7/21/2015**

EF / hw

**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).

cc:



