

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

MAHS Reg. No.: 15-011867
Issue No.: 3005
Agency Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: September 10, 2015
County: Calhoun (21)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Susanne E. Harris

HEARING DECISION FOR INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION

Upon the request for a hearing by the Department of Health and Human Services (Department), 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 September 10, 2014, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Participants on behalf of the Respondent included the Respondent, [REDACTED].

ISSUES

Did the Respondent commit an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) and thereby receive an over issuance (OI) of the Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits that the Department is entitled to recoup?

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 July 7, 2015, to establish an OI of benefits received by the Respondent as a result of the Respondent having allegedly committed an IPV.
2. The OIG has requested that the Respondent be disqualified from receiving program benefits.
3. The Respondent was a recipient of FAP benefits issued by the Department.
4. The Respondent was aware of the responsibility to report changes in her household circumstances to the Department, within 10 days.
5. The 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 OI period is May 1, 2013, to February 28, 2014.
7. During the OI period, the Respondent was issued \$ [REDACTED] in FAP benefits by the State of Michigan, and the Department alleges that Respondent was entitled to \$ [REDACTED] in such benefits during this time period.
8. The Department alleges that the Respondent received an OI in FAP benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED]
9. This was the Respondent's first alleged IPV.
10. A notice of hearing was mailed to the 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.

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 (2012), p. 10.

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 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.

In this case, the Department has met its burden of proving, by a clear and convincing standard, that the Respondent was aware of her reporting responsibilities and yet failed to report her earned income. The Respondent's failure to report such resulted in her receiving an OI of the FAP. During the hearing, the Respondent testified that she was confused between the difference of the net and gross income. The Respondent testified that her paycheck had substantially decreased, and she didn't look at the gross income. This testimony was found to be less than credible, especially because on the Assistance Application in evidence the Respondent is specifically asked if she has earned income and the Respondent replied no. As such, the Administrative Law Judge concludes that the Respondent withheld information for the purpose of establishing and maintaining program benefits and did thereby commit her first IPV.

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, p.12. 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.12. 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. 13.

In this case, the Administrative Law Judge has concluded that the Respondent has committed her first IPV. As such, the Administrative Law Judge concludes that the appropriate disqualification period to be imposed is one year.

Overissuance

When a client group receives more benefits than entitled to receive, the Department must attempt to recoup the OI. BAM 700, p. 1. In this case, the OIG Agent testified that the Respondent has had a previous recoupment hearing where it has already been determined that the Department's action recouping the OI at issue in this case is in accordance with departmental policy. As such, no additional OI is found.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law concludes that the Department has established by clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent committed an IPV. The Department is **ORDERED** to impose a disqualification period in accordance with departmental policy.

Susanne E. Harris

Susanne E. Harris
Administrative Law Judge
for Nick Lyon, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

Date Mailed: **9/14/2015**

SEH/jaf

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:

