



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM
Christopher Seppanen
Executive Director

MIKE ZIMMER
DIRECTOR



Date Mailed: April 8, 2016
MAHS Docket No.: 15-012421
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED]

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), 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 April 4, 2016, 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.
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 \$1,834 in FAP benefits by the State of Michigan, and the Department alleges that Respondent was entitled to \$146 in such benefits during this time period.
8. The Department alleges that Respondent received an OI in FAP benefits in the amount of \$1,688.
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 2010), p. 7. Changes must be reported within 10 days of receiving the first payment reflecting the change. BAM 105, p. 7.

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. 7.

In this case, the Department alleges that Respondent committed an IPV of her FAP benefits because she failed to accurately report her husband's income to the Department, which caused an overissuance of FAP benefits.

Furthermore, the Department alleges that Respondent received an OI amount of \$1,688 during the alleged fraud period. See Exhibit A, p. 3. 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 2010 to May 2010. See Exhibit A, pp. 36-46. The undersigned reviewed the FAP budgets and determined that they are inaccurate. For each budget, the Department either underbudgeted the husband's income or overbudgeted the husband's income.

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.

For example, for January 2010, Respondent's husband's actual income was approximately \$3,664, but the Department underbudgeted to \$3,151. See Exhibit A, pp. 32 and 45-46. Another example, for February 2010, the husband's actual income was

approximately \$3,229, but the Department overbudgeted to \$3,471. See Exhibit A, pp. 32 and 43-44. The Department also overbudgeted the income for March 2010 and May 2010. See Exhibit A, pp. 32, 37-38, and 41-42.

Based on the foregoing information and evidence, the Department did not satisfy its burden of showing that it acted in accordance with Department policy when it failed to establish an OI amount for FAP benefits. As shown in the examples provided above, the Department failed to establish that it properly calculated the OI budgets. Because the Department failed to establish that it properly calculated the OI budgets, the Department did not satisfy its burden of showing that Respondent received an OI for FAP benefits. BAM 700, p. 1 and BAM 720, p. 8.

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 and 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 her authorized representative. BPG 2015-010 (July 2015), 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 2015-010, 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.

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 FAP program benefits in the amount of \$1,688.

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

EF/hw



Eric Feldman

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

NOTICE OF APPEAL: A party may appeal this Order in circuit court within 30 days of the receipt date. A copy of the circuit court appeal must be filed with the Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS).

A party may request a rehearing or reconsideration of this Order if the request is received by MAHS within 30 days of the date the Order was issued. The party requesting a rehearing or reconsideration must provide the specific reasons for the request. MAHS will not review any response to a request for rehearing/reconsideration.

A written request may be mailed or faxed to MAHS. If submitted by fax, the written request must be faxed to (517) 335-6088; 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

DHHS

[REDACTED]

Petitioner

[REDACTED]

Respondent

[REDACTED]