



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

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

SHELLY EDGERTON
DIRECTOR

[REDACTED]

Date Mailed: June 9, 2016
MAHS Docket No.: 16-004111
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Eric J. 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 telephone hearing was held on May 23, 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 his felony drug conviction.
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 \$5,643 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 \$5,643.
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 January 1, 2016, 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 (January 2016), pp. 12-13; ASM 165 (May 2013), pp. 1-2.

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 (January 2016), 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.

In this case, the Department alleges that Respondent committed an IPV of his FAP benefits because he failed to report a felony drug conviction to the Department, which required that FAP benefits be issued to an authorized representative.

A person who has been convicted of a felony for the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances is disqualified if:

- Terms of probation or parole are violated, and
- The qualifying conviction occurred after August 22, 1996.

BEM 203 (October 2012 to January 2015), pp. 1-2. If an individual is not in violation of the terms of probation or parole, Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits must be paid in the form of restricted payments and FAP benefits must be issued to an authorized representative. BEM 203, pp. 1-2.

The authorized representative (AR) is chosen by the client and can only access the FAP account. BAM 401E (December 2011), p. 1. Entering the AR's name in Bridges will automatically generate a Bridge card. BAM 401E, p. 1.

First, the Department presented Respondent's application dated [REDACTED], to show that he acknowledged his rights and responsibilities. See Exhibit A, pp. 11-22.

Second, the Department presented evidence that Respondent had been convicted of a felony for the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substance on or around [REDACTED]. See Exhibit A, pp. 103-107.

Third, the Department presented Respondent's application dated [REDACTED] and redetermination dated [REDACTED], which were submitted during the alleged fraud period. See Exhibit A, pp. 23-54. In these forms, Respondent marked "no" the question if he had ever been convicted of a drug-related felony, even though the Department argued that he had been convicted of a drug-related felony. See Exhibit A, pp. 26 and 54.

Fourth, the Department Respondent's "Case Comments-Summary" document, which indicated during a phone interview with the caseworker on or around [REDACTED], it was discovered that Respondent had a felony that has never been reported and no authorized rep. See Exhibit A, p. 57.

Fifth, the Department presented an “EPPIC – Recipient Case Manager” that showed Respondent had no authorized representative to access his FAP account. See Exhibit A, p. 112.

Sixth, the OIG Investigation Report indicated that the OIG agent spoke to Respondent on or around March 2015, in which Respondent stated he was aware that he had a previous felony conviction but for some reason did not think it need to be reported. See Exhibit A, p. 4.

Based on the foregoing information and evidence, the Department has established that Respondent committed an IPV of FAP benefits because he failed to report a felony drug conviction to the Department, which required that FAP benefits be issued to an authorized representative.

The evidence presented that (i) Respondent was convicted of a felony for the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances after August 22, 1996; and (ii) Respondent was not in violation of the terms of probation or parole. See BEM 203, p. 2 and see Exhibit A, pp. 103-107.

The Department presented evidence to show that Respondent committed the IPV during the fraud period. In Respondent’s application and redetermination, he marked “no” the question if he had ever been convicted of a drug-related felony, even though the evidence established that he had been convicted of a drug-related felony. See Exhibit A, pp. 26, 54, and 103-107. This is persuasive evidence to show that Respondent intentionally withheld or misrepresented his drug-related information (which required that FAP benefits be issued to an authorized representative), for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing or preventing reduction of his FAP program benefits or eligibility

In summary, there was clear and convincing evidence that Respondent was aware of his responsibility to report his drug-related felony and that he intentionally withheld or misrepresented this information for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing or preventing reduction of his FAP program benefits or eligibility. The Department has established 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, p. 15; 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 satisfied its burden of showing that Respondent committed an IPV concerning FAP benefits. Therefore, Respondent is subject to a disqualification under the FAP program. BAM 720, p. 16.

Overissuance

When a client group receives more benefits than 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 the present case, due to Respondent's felony drug conviction and subsequent failure to report the conviction and obtain an authorized representative, Respondent is responsible for the unauthorized issuance and use of \$5,643 in FAP benefits to which he was not entitled to receive from [REDACTED]. See Exhibit A, pp. 58-62. Thus, the Department is entitled to recoup \$5,643 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** established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV.
2. Respondent **did** receive an OI of FAP program benefits in the amount of \$5,643.

The Department is **ORDERED** to initiate recoupment/collection procedures for the amount of \$5,643 in accordance with Department policy, less any amount already recouped and/or collected.

It is **FURTHER ORDERED** that Respondent be disqualified from FAP for a period **12 months**.

EF/hw


Eric J. 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]