



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: October 3, 2016
MAHS Docket No.: 16-011712
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 [REDACTED], 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 \$ [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 Respondent received an OI in FAP benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED].
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 U.S. 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 benefits because he failed to notify the Department of his employment wages, which caused an overissuance of FAP benefits.

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

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. 10.

First, the Department presented Respondent's online applications dated [REDACTED], to show that the Respondent was aware of his responsibility to report changes as required. See Exhibit A, pp. 11-31.

Second, the Department provided Respondent's employment verification, which showed that his employment began on or about [REDACTED], and the date of his last paycheck was on or about [REDACTED]. Exhibit A, pp. 32-35.

Third, the Department presented Respondent's redetermination received on [REDACTED] which was submitted during the alleged fraud period. Exhibit A, pp. 36-41. In the redetermination, Respondent reported receiving income from "Friends," but did not report receiving any income from his employer at the time, "[REDACTED]" Exhibit A, pp. 35 and 39. However, following the submission of his redetermination, his caseworker conducted a redetermination interview with Respondent on [REDACTED]. Exhibit A, p. 42. As part of the evidence record, the Department included a "Case Comments-Summary" document (case comments), which summarized the case notes the caseworker took during the interview. Exhibit A, p. 42. In the case comments, the

caseworker indicated that Respondent reported his employment wages during the interview. Exhibit A, p. 42.

Based on the foregoing information and evidence, the Department has failed to establish by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV of FAP benefits. The evidence presented that Respondent did not report his income until his redetermination interview held on [REDACTED]. See Exhibit A, p. 42. This was approximately six months after he began his employment (employment start date on or about [REDACTED]). See Exhibit A, pp. 32 and 42. The evidence is persuasive that Respondent did not report his income timely. See BAM 105, p. 10. Nevertheless, this evidence shows that Respondent did not intentionally withhold or misrepresent his income information as he eventually reported it to the Department. 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.

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 not satisfied its burden of showing that Respondent committed an IPV concerning FAP benefits. Therefore, Respondent is not subject to a disqualification under the FAP program. BAM 720, p. 16.

Overissuance

As stated previously, the Department failed to show that Respondent purposely failed to report income. Thus, no IPV was committed. However, the Department can still proceed with recoupment of the OI when there is client error.

A client/provider error overissuance is when the client received more benefits than he/she was entitled to because the client/CDC provider gave incorrect or incomplete information to the department. BAM 715 (January 2016), p. 1.

A client error is present in this situation because Respondent failed to timely notify the Department of his earned income. In regards to policy, the evidence established that Respondent did not report the earned income changes within 10 days of receiving the first payment reflecting the change. BAM 105, p. 10.

In establishing the OI, the Department presented OI FAP budgets for the benefit periods of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Exhibit A, pp. 45-57. The purpose of the OI budgets is to show how the Department calculated the overpayment amount. See BAM 715, p. 8. However, after a thorough review of the FAP budgets presented, the undersigned determined that the Department failed to establish an OI of FAP benefits.

Policy states that if improper reporting or budgeting of income caused the overissuance, the Department uses actual income for that income source. BAM 715, p. 8. The Department converts all income to a monthly amount. BAM 715, p. 8. Except, for FAP only, the Department does not convert the averaged monthly income reported on a wage match. BAM 715, p. 8. Any income properly budgeted in the issuance budget remains the same in that month's corrected budget. BAM 715, p. 8.

In the present case, the Department failed to provide sufficient verifications to show the actual income Respondent received for each overissuance month (i.e., payroll stubs). The Department only presented verification of his employment wages from the end of [REDACTED]. Exhibit A, pp. 32-35. However, the Department alleged the OI period is from [REDACTED]. The burden is on the Department to establish an OI for the entire alleged OI period. Regarding the OI months of [REDACTED] (majority of this month), the Department failed to provide sufficient verification of the actual income Respondent received. Thus, the undersigned is unable to determine if the Department properly calculated Respondent's gross income without verification of his actual income. See BAM 715, p. 18.

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 for FAP benefits. The Department failed to provide sufficient verifications to show the actual income Respondent received for the entire alleged OI period in order to show the budgets were properly calculated. Because the Department failed to establish that it properly budgeted Respondent's income for the entire alleged OI period, the Department did not satisfy its burden of showing that Respondent received an OI for FAP benefits. BAM 700, p. 1 and BAM 715, p. 8.

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 \$ [REDACTED]

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



EJF/jaf

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

Petitioner

[REDACTED]

DHHS

[REDACTED]

Respondent

[REDACTED]

Via email

[REDACTED]