



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

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

SHELLY EDGERTON
DIRECTOR

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Date Mailed: December 19, 2016
MAHS Docket No.: 16-010695
Agency No.: ██████████
Petitioner: ██████
Respondent: ██████████

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 November 28, 2016, from Detroit, Michigan. The Department was represented by ██████████, Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). The Respondent was represented by ██████████ Respondent; and her witness ██████████

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 April 29, 2016, 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 June 1, 2015 to November 30, 2015 (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 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 her FAP benefits because she failed to notify the Department of her employment earnings, which caused an overissuance of FAP benefits.

Clients must report changes in circumstance that potentially affect eligibility or benefit amount. BAM 105 (April 2015), p. 11. Changes must be reported within 10 days of receiving the first payment reflecting the change. BAM 105, p. 11.

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. 11.

First, the Department presented Respondent's online application dated January 26, 2015, to show that the Respondent was aware of her responsibility to report changes as required. Exhibit A, pp. 11-22.

Second, the Department presented verification of Respondent's income that showed she received wages from April 16, 2015 to November 26, 2015. Exhibit A, pp. 31-33.

Third, the Department presented Respondent's Notice of Case Action dated January 30, 2015, which advised her to report income changes within 10-days. Exhibit A, pp. 10 and 23-28.

Fourth, the Department presented a Wage Math Client Notice (wage match) that was generated on March 11, 2016, which the Department argued was the first time the income had been discovered. Exhibit A, pp. 29-30. Furthermore, the wage match was returned to the Department on March 23, 2016, and the second page of the form had the following written in the middle of the page "██████████ refused to fill this out. They said they don't and never will fill these forms out." Exhibit A, pp. 29-30.

Fifth, the OIG Investigation Report indicated that Respondent previously spoke to the agent by telephone on or about April 20, 2016. Exhibit A, p. 4.

At the hearing, Respondent and her witness argued and/or asserted the following: (i) she did not intend commit an IPV of her FAP benefits; (ii) the wage match that had the statement written across it was completed by her employer (Exhibit A, p. 30) when she attempted to have them complete the form; (iii) because [REDACTED] refused to complete the form, Respondent submitted the wage match on March 23, 2016, along with her printed electronic paystub; (iv) her witness, who Respondent resided with at the time, was also a co-worker of Respondent's at [REDACTED] and witnessed what had occurred with the employer (i.e., the employer refused to fill out the wage match); (v) Respondent reported her employment to her caseworker three to four days after getting her first pay check by leaving a voicemail, but received no call back; and (vi) the next correspondence and/or contact Respondent received back after leaving the voicemail was the wage match dated March 11, 2016.

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. There was no evidence to show that Respondent, during the alleged fraud period, represented that she intentionally withheld her employment earnings from the Department. The Department presented Respondent's application, notice of case action, wage match, and employment verification. However, this failed to show by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld her employment income during the alleged fraud period for the purpose of maintaining Michigan FAP eligibility. Therefore, in the absence of any clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld or misrepresented the earned income information for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing or preventing reduction of her 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 above, there was no IPV committed in this case. 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.

In the present case, Respondent claimed that she timely notified her caseworker of her employment earnings when she left a voicemail, but received no call back. However, Respondent failed to provide any documents or proof that she contacted her caseworker showing that she reported and/or verified her employment earnings. Instead, the Department presented credible evidence and testimony showing that a client error is present in this case because Respondent failed to notify the Department of her earned income. In regards to policy, the evidence established that Respondent did not report her income changes within 10 days of receiving the first payment reflecting the change. BAM 105, p. 11. Thus, an OI is present in this case.

Additionally, 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 715, p. 6.

In this case, the Department presented OI budgets for June 2015 to November 2015. Exhibit A, pp. 34-48. The budgets included Respondent's income that was not previously budgeted. Exhibit A, pp. 31-33. A review of the OI budgets found them to be fair and correct. See BAM 715, p. 8. However, the Department failed to present sufficient evidence showing that Respondent actually received FAP benefits for June 2015. Respondent's Benefit Summary Inquiry shows that she only received FAP benefits from July 2015 to November 2015, but not June 2015. Exhibit A, p. 49. Because the Department failed to establish that Respondent received a FAP allotment for June 2015, this benefit month will be subtracted from the total OI sought. See BAM 715, p. 6. Nevertheless, the Department is still entitled to recoup [REDACTED] of FAP benefits it issued from July 1, 2015 to November 30, 2015.


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** receive an OI of FAP program benefits in the amount of [REDACTED]

The Department is **ORDERED** to reduce the OI to [REDACTED] for the period July 1, 2015 to November 30, 2015, and initiate recoupment/collection procedures in accordance with Department policy, less any amount already recouped and/or collected.

EF/tm



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

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