



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: February 2, 2017
MAHS Docket No.: 16-013467
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Gary Heisler

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 January 18, 2017, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Respondent appeared and testified.

ISSUE

Whether Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) by trafficking Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] ?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the clear and convincing evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

- (1) Regulation Agent [REDACTED] of the Department's Office of Inspector General conducted an investigation of [REDACTED], the owner/operator of [REDACTED]. During the investigation Regulation Agent [REDACTED] reviewed the records of [REDACTED] to include purchases made by [REDACTED]. The investigation determined that [REDACTED] regularly places special orders for two items that [REDACTED] does not keep in stock. Those two items are Beef Stk Slcd Ckd Bulk 4-2.5# and Catfish Fillets 7-9 oz. The investigation also revealed that [REDACTED] regularly made large purchases at [REDACTED] and paid for the purchases with multiple Food Assistance Program (FAP) Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards that were not issued to [REDACTED]. Following the investigation [REDACTED].

stopped paying for large purchases with other peoples' Food Assistance Program (FAP) Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards.

- (2) On May 5, 2014, Respondent signed the affidavit in an Assistance Application (DHS-1171) certifying notice of the conditions that constitute fraud/IPV and trafficking and the potential consequences.
- (3) On June 16, 2014, Respondent was an ongoing recipient of Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits. Respondent's Food Assistance Program (FAP) Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card was used for a transaction at [REDACTED] for purchases that included Beef Stk Slcd Ckd Bulk 4-2.5#. In addition to the 10 pounds of sliced beef steak the purchase included 27 pounds of French fries, 80 beef franks, 26 ounces of salt and 5 pounds of chicken wings. These transactions were made to provide supplies for [REDACTED] to use at [REDACTED]. The total amount of Respondent's trafficking transactions was \$ [REDACTED].
- (4) Respondent was clearly and correctly instructed regarding the proper and allowed use of Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits and the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card.
- (5) Respondent had no apparent physical or mental impairment that would have limited his understanding of the program rules.
- (6) This is Respondent's 2nd Intentional Program Violation (IPV) of the Food Assistance Program (FAP).

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Food Assistance Program (FAP) [formerly known as the Food Stamp (FS) program] is established by the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, and is implemented by the federal regulations contained in Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers FAP pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and 1997 AACR 400.3001-3015.

In this case, the Department has requested a disqualification hearing to establish that Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) by trafficking Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits.

Bridges Administration Manual (BAM) 700 Benefit Over-Issuances defines trafficking as follows:

Trafficking is:

The buying, selling or stealing of FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food. Examples would be liquor, exchange of firearms, ammunition, explosives or controlled substances.

Selling products purchased with FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food.

Purchasing containers with deposits, dumping/discarding product and then returning containers to obtain cash refund deposits.

Attempting to buy, sell or steal FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food.

Bridges Administration Manual (BAM) 720 Intentional Program Violation governs the Department's actions in this case. It provides in relevant part:

DEFINITIONS ALL PROGRAMS

Suspected IPV

Suspected IPV means an over-issuance 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 their reporting responsibilities.

IPV is suspected when there is clear and convincing evidence that the client or CDC provider has intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing or preventing reduction of program benefits or eligibility.

FAP Only

IPV is suspected for a client who is alleged to have trafficked FAP benefits.

IPV

FAP Only

IPV exists when an administrative hearing decision, a repayment and disqualification agreement or court decision determines FAP benefits were trafficked.

OVER-ISSUANCE AMOUNT

FAP Trafficking

The OI amount for trafficking-related IPV's is the value of the trafficked benefits as determined by:

The court decision.

The individual's admission.

Documentation used to establish the trafficking determination, such as an affidavit from a store owner or sworn testimony from a federal or state investigator of how much a client could have reasonably trafficked in that store. This can be established through circumstantial evidence.

OIG RESPONSIBILITIES

IPV Hearings

FIP, SDA, CDC, MA and FAP

OIG represents DHS during the hearing process for IPV hearings.

OIG requests IPV hearings when no signed DHS-826 or DHS-830 is obtained, and correspondence to the client is not returned as T

Exception: For FAP only, OIG will pursue an IPV hearing when correspondence was sent using first class mail and is returned as undeliverable.

OIG requests IPV hearing for cases involving:

1. FAP trafficking OIs that are not forwarded to the prosecutor.

INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION (IPV) OF TRAFFICKING

The Department has submitted evidence showing that [REDACTED] was trafficking Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits. The determination was based on an investigation by the Department's Office of Inspector General, of [REDACTED] purchases at [REDACTED]. The investigation determined that [REDACTED] regularly places special orders for two items that [REDACTED] does not keep in stock, Beef Stk Slcd Ckd Bulk 4-2.5# and Catfish Fillets 7-9 oz. The investigation revealed that purchases of the two items, special ordered by [REDACTED], are criteria for Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card transactions that indicate trafficking.

The Department has submitted evidence which shows that Respondent made an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card purchase at [REDACTED] that included Beef Stk Slcd Ckd Bulk 4-2.5#. In addition to the 10 pounds of sliced beef steak the purchase included 27 pounds of French fries, 80 beef franks, 26 ounces of salt and 5 pounds of chicken wings.

Respondent was issued the "How To Use Your Michigan Bridge Card" booklet at the same time as being issued an Electronic Benefit Transfer Card. The booklet provided

Respondent with notice of the Food Assistance Program rules and consequences for breaking those rules.

Respondent signed the affidavit in the May 5, 2014, Assistance Application (DHS-1171) certifying notice of the conditions that constitute fraud/IPV and trafficking and the potential consequences.

During this hearing Respondent testified that [REDACTED] placed the special order for her, but she purchased the items for a BBQ party she held. It is noted that the intent of Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits is not to feed others at a BBQ party.

Testimony and other evidence must be weighed and considered according to its reasonableness. *Gardiner v Courtright*, 165 Mich 54, 62; 130 NW 322 (1911); *Dep't of Community Health v Risch*, 274 Mich App 365, 372; 733 NW2d 403 (2007). Moreover, the weight and credibility of this evidence is generally for the fact-finder to determine. *Dep't of Community Health*, 274 Mich App at 372; *People v Terry*, 224 Mich App 447, 452; 569 NW2d 641 (1997). In evaluating the credibility and weight to be given the testimony of a witness, the fact-finder may consider the demeanor of the witness, the reasonableness of the witness's testimony, and the interest, if any, the witness may have in the outcome of the matter. *People v Wade*, 303 Mich 303 (1942), *cert den*, 318 US 783 (1943). Based on the totality of the evidence in the record, and in consideration of the consequences of this hearing, Respondent's assertion is not found credible.

The evidence submitted by the Department constitutes clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed, and intended to commit, an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) by trafficking Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]

DISQUALIFICATION

In accordance with 7 CFR §273.16(e)(8)(i), BAM 720 states that a court or hearing decision that finds a client committed an IPV disqualifies that client from receiving program benefits. 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.

Clients who commit an IPV are disqualified for a standard disqualification period of one year for the first IPV, two years for the second IPV and a lifetime disqualification for the third IPV.

DECISION AND ORDER

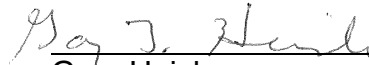
The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, finds that the Department has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation by engaging in Food Assistance Program (FAP) trafficking in the

amount of \$ [REDACTED] which the Department is entitled to recoup in accordance with Department policies.

This is Respondent's 2nd Food Assistance Program (FAP) Intentional Program Violation (IPV) and the Department must disqualify Respondent from receiving Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits in accordance with 7 CFR §273.16(e)(8)(i) and Bridges Administration Manual (BAM) 720.

It is ORDERED that the actions of the Department of Human Services, in this matter, are UPHeld.

GH/nr



Gary Heisler
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]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Petitioner

[REDACTED]

Respondent

[REDACTED]