



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 16, 2017
MAHS Docket No.: 16-014108
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). The Respondent was present for hearing and represented herself.

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 criminal justice disqualifications.
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 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 (August 2016), 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 prior drug felony convictions, which occurred after [REDACTED].

An individual convicted of a felony for the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances two or more times in separate periods will be permanently disqualified if both offenses occurred after [REDACTED]. BEM 203 (January 2015), p. 2.

First, the Department argued that Respondent was convicted of a felony on or about [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], for the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances two or more times after [REDACTED]. Exhibit A, pp. 15-18.

Second, the Department presented Respondent's redetermination received on [REDACTED], to show that she acknowledged her rights and responsibilities to report changes as required. Exhibit A, pp. 11-14. In the redetermination, Respondent did not answer the question that asked if she had ever been convicted of a drug-related felony occurring after [REDACTED]. Exhibit A, p. 13. However, Respondent marked "no" to the question that asked if she had been convicted for more than one drug-related felony, even though the Department argued that she had been convicted of more than one drug-related felony. Exhibit A, p. 13.

At the hearing, Respondent argued and/or asserted the following: (i) she did not intend to commit an IPV of her FAP benefits; (ii) she does not dispute her two drug-related felony convictions; (iii) she completed the redetermination in a rush and mistakenly marked "no" to the drug question; (iv) on or about [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] Respondent was in a drug rehabilitation program; and she completed an application for FAP benefits at the same time and would have indicated in the application that she had drug felony convictions; thus, she argued this would have made the Department aware of her prior drug convictions since [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] and (v) she claimed to have mental disorders, she was prescribed medications, and she receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

Based on the foregoing information, the Department has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV of her FAP benefits.

First, the evidence established that the Respondent was convicted of a felony on or about [REDACTED], and [REDACTED], for the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances two or more times after [REDACTED]. Exhibit A, pp. 15-18.

Second, Respondent claimed that she did not intend to commit an IPV of her FAP benefits; and she mistakenly answered the drug-related question as she completed it in a rush. However, the undersigned Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) does not find

Respondent's argument persuasive. Respondent is the one who completed the redetermination when she signed it on [REDACTED]. Exhibit A, p. 14. Respondent clearly marked "no" to the question that asked if she had been convicted of more than one drug-related felony, which was inaccurate. Moreover, Respondent was able to answer or complete other portions of the redetermination correctly, i.e., rent and utility deductions. Exhibit A, p. 12. Respondent further claimed that the Department was well aware of her drug-related convictions when she completed an application at the time she was attending a drug rehabilitation program. However, Respondent failed to provide any evidence, such as her application or proof of drug rehabilitation attendance, to corroborate her claim that the Department was aware of her drug convictions. As such, the undersigned ALJ does not find Respondent's arguments credible.

Third, the Department presented evidence to show that Respondent committed an IPV of her FAP benefits. The Department presented Respondent's redetermination received on [REDACTED], in which she marked "no" to the question that asked if she had been convicted of more than one drug-related felony, even though the evidence established that she had been convicted of more than one drug-related felony. Exhibit A, pp. 13 and 15-18. As such, Respondent committed an IPV of her FAP benefits when she intentionally withheld her two drug-related felony convictions from the Department. This would have made Respondent permanently disqualified from FAP benefits because she was convicted of a 2nd offense drug-related felony after [REDACTED]. See BEM 203, p. 2. Therefore, there was clear and convincing evidence that Respondent was aware of her responsibility to report her criminal justice disqualification and that she intentionally withheld this information for the purpose of maintaining Michigan FAP eligibility.

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 2016), p. 1. Clients are disqualified for 10 years for an 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.

As previously stated, Respondent should have been permanently disqualified from FAP eligibility because she was convicted of a 2nd offense drug-related felony after [REDACTED]. See BEM 203, p. 2. Thus, Respondent was not eligible for FAP benefits and was over issued FAP benefits for any period she was ineligible to receive FAP benefits.

In establishing the OI amount, the Department presented Respondent's Benefit Summary Inquiry showing that she was issued FAP benefits by the State of Michigan from [REDACTED], which totaled \$ [REDACTED] Exhibit A, p. 22. Thus, the Department is entitled to recoup \$ [REDACTED] 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 \$ [REDACTED]

The Department is **ORDERED** to initiate recoupment/collection procedures for the amount of \$ [REDACTED] 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 of **12 months**.

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

DHHS

[REDACTED]

Petitioner

[REDACTED]

Respondent

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]