



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 21, 2017
MAHS Docket No.: 17-000568
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Kevin Scully

HEARING DECISION

Following Petitioner's request for a hearing, this matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and 400.37; 7 CFR 273.15 to 273.18; 42 CFR 431.200 to 431.250; 45 CFR 99.1 to 99.33; and 45 CFR 205.10. After due notice, telephone hearing was held on February 16, 2017, from Lansing, Michigan. The Petitioner was represented by her mother, [REDACTED]. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], Case Manager, and [REDACTED], Family Independence Manager.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Health and Human Services (Department) sanction Petitioner's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits for noncompliance with the Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) program?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

1. Petitioner was an ongoing Family Independence Program (FIP) recipient.
2. Petitioner was referred to the Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) program as a condition of receiving Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits and was assigned 5 activities per week, including physical therapy, attending doctor appointments, and volunteering activities. Exhibit A, p 3.
3. On October 19, 2016, Petitioner acknowledged her weekly responsibilities to the Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) program by signing her Family Self-Sufficiency Plan Personal Contract (DHS-1539). Exhibit A, pp 2-4.

4. Petitioner failed to provide the Department with a completed Weekly Activity Log (DHS-630) for the week beginning November 6, 2016. Exhibit A, p 5.
5. On November 29, 2016, the Department received Petitioner's Weekly Activity Log (DHS-630) for the week beginning November 13, 2016, but this log only contained 3 activities. Exhibit A, p 6.
6. On December 1, 2016, the Department sent Petitioner a Notice of Noncompliance (DHS-2444) informing her that a triage meeting would take place on December 7, 2016. Exhibit A, pp 9-10.
7. On December 1, 2016, the Department notified Petitioner that he Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits would close effective January 1, 2017. Exhibit A, p 7.
8. On January 4, 2017, the Department received Petitioner's request for a hearing protesting the sanction on her Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits. Exhibit A, pp 12-13.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Department policies are contained in the Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), Department of Health and Human Services Reference Tables Manual (RFT), and Department of Health and Human Services Emergency Relief Manual (ERM).

The Family Independence Program (FIP) was established pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-193, and 42 USC 601 to 679c. The Department (formerly known as the Department of Human Services) administers FIP pursuant to 45 CFR 233-260, MCL 400.10, the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3101-.3131.

Clients must be made aware that public assistance is limited to 48 months to meet their family's needs and they must take personal responsibility to achieve self-sufficiency. This message, along with information on ways to achieve independence, direct support services, non-compliance penalties, and good cause reasons, is initially shared by Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) when the client applies for cash assistance. The Partnership. Accountability Training. Hope. (PATH) program requirements, education and training opportunities, and assessments will be covered by PATH when a mandatory PATH participant is referred at application. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 229 (October 1, 2015), p 1.

A Work Eligible Individual (WEI) who refuses, without good cause, to participate in assigned employment and/or other self-sufficiency related activities is subject to penalties. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 230A (October 1, 2015), p 1.

The Department will not schedule a triage for instances of noncompliance while the FIP application is pending. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 233A (May 1, 2015), p 9.

Noncompliance by a WEI while the application is pending results in group ineligibility. A WEI applicant who refused employment without good cause, within 30 days prior to the date of application or while the application is pending, must have benefits delayed. BEM 233A, p 7.

As a condition of eligibility, all WEIs and non-WEIs must work or engage in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities. Noncompliance of applicants, recipients, or member adds means doing any of the following without good cause:

- Failing or refusing to:
 - Appear and participate with Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) or other employment service provider.
 - Comply with activities assigned on the FSSP.
 - Provide legitimate documentation of work participation.
 - Participate in employment and/or self-sufficiency-related activities.
 - Participate in required activity.

BEM 233A, pp 2-3.

Good cause is a valid reason for noncompliance with employment and/or self-sufficiency related activities that are based on factors that are beyond the control of the noncompliant person. A claim of good cause must be verified and documented for member adds and recipients. BEM 233A, p4.

Good cause includes the following:

- Client Unit: The client is physically or mentally unfit for the job or activity, as shown by medical evidence or other reliable information. This includes any disability-related limitations that preclude participation in a work and/or self-sufficiency-related activity. The disability-related needs or limitations may not have been identified or assessed prior to the noncompliance.
- Illness or Injury: The client has a debilitating illness or injury, or a spouse or child's illness or injury requires in-home care by the client.
- Reasonable Accommodation: The DHS, employment services provider, contractor, agency, or employer failed to make reasonable accommodations for the client's disability or the client's needs related to the disability.

BEM 233A, pp 4-6.

PATH participants will not be terminated from PATH without first scheduling a triage meeting with the client to jointly discuss noncompliance and good cause. Clients can either attend a meeting or participate in a conference call if attendance at the triage meeting is not possible. If a client calls to reschedule an already scheduled triage meeting, offer a phone conference at that time. If the client requests to have an in-person triage, reschedule for one additional triage appointment. Clients must comply with triage requirements and must provide good cause verification within the negative action period. BEM 233A, p 10.

The Department will determine good cause based on the best information available during the triage and prior to the negative action date. Good cause may be verified by information already on file with DHS or PATH. Good cause must be considered even if the client does not attend, with particular attention to possible disabilities (including disabilities that have not been diagnosed or identified by the client) and unmet needs for accommodation. BEM 233A, pp 9-10.

A Work Eligible Individual (WEI) and non-WEIs, who fail, without good cause, to participate in employment or self-sufficiency-related activities, must be penalized. Depending on the case situation, penalties include the following:

- Delay in eligibility at application.
- Ineligibility (denial or termination of FIP with no minimum penalty period).

Case closure for a minimum of three months for the first episode of noncompliance, six months for the second episode of noncompliance and lifetime closure for the third episode of noncompliance. BEM 233A, p 1.

The Department will disqualify a Food Assistance Program (FAP) group member for noncompliance when all the following exist:

- The client was active both FIP/RCA and FAP on the date of the FIP/RCA noncompliance.
- The client did not comply with FIP/RCA employment requirements.
- The client is subject to a penalty on the FIP/RCA program.
- The client is not deferred from FAP work requirements.
- The client did not have good cause for the noncompliance.
- Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 233B (July 1, 2013), p 3.

Petitioner was an ongoing FIP recipient and the Department had referred her to the PATH program as a condition of receiving FIP benefits. Petitioner acknowledged her duty to perform "5 activities" per week by signing her Family Self-Sufficiency Plan Personal Contract (DHS-1539) on October 19, 2016.

Petitioner was noncompliant with the PATH program when she failed to provide the Department with verification that she had completed her 5 activities for the week beginning November 6, 2016. Petitioner was noncompliant with the PATH program when she submitted a Weekly Activity Log (DHS-630) for the week beginning November 13, 2016, with a record of only completing 3 of the 5 required activities.

The Department conducted a triage meeting on December 7, 2016, where Petitioner was given the opportunity to establish good cause for her noncompliance with the PATH program. Petitioner did not attend this meeting and the Department made its determination of good cause based on the available information. The Department found that Petitioner did not have good cause for her noncompliance with the PATH program.

Petitioner's representative testified that Petitioner turned in a log for the week beginning November 6, 2016, but did not provide any evidence of its submission. Petitioner's representative did not deny that the November 13, 2016, log only contained 3 activities, but argued that Petitioner believed that 5 hours of activities were required regardless of the number of activities. Petitioner's representative also argued that Petitioner's medical conditions were a barrier to her completing her PATH assignment.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that Petitioner acknowledged her duty to perform 5 activities with her signature on the DHS-1539, and she either knew or should have known what was required of her to remain in good standing with the PATH program.


A claim of good cause must be supported by evidence. This Administrative Law Judge finds that Petitioner did not present any evidence that her medical condition was a barrier to her participation in the PATH program during the first half of November that was beyond her control.

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, finds that the Department acted in accordance with Department policy when it sanctioned Petitioner's Family Independence Program (FIP) benefits for noncompliance with the Partnership. Accountability. Training. Hope. (PATH) program.

DECISION AND ORDER

Accordingly, the Department's decision is AFFIRMED.

KS/nr



Kevin Scully
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]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Petitioner

[REDACTED]