



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: March 14, 2017
MAHS Docket No.: 16-014454
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Kevin Scully

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 with Mich Admin Code, R 400.3130 and R 400.3178. After due notice, telephone hearing was held on February 22, 2017, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED] [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 the Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV)?
3. Should Respondent be disqualified from the Food Assistance Program (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. On an application for assistance dated November 1, 2012, the Respondent acknowledged the duty to report any drug-related felonies to the Department. Exhibit A, pp 10-40.

2. Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement.
3. On his November 1, 2012, application for assistance, Respondent reported to the Department that no one in his benefit group had been convicted of a drug-related felony. Exhibit A, p 14.
4. During his eligibility interview conducted on November 1, 2012, Respondent reported to his caseworker that he had been convicted of one drug-related felony in June of 2007. Exhibit A, p 41.
5. On an application for assistance dated February 23, 2014, the Respondent acknowledged the duty to report any drug-related felonies to the Department. Exhibit A, pp 42-71
6. Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement.
7. On his February 23, 2014, application for assistance, Respondent reported to the Department that no one in his benefit group had been convicted of a drug-related felony. Exhibit A, p 45.
8. On December 29, 2014, the Department received Respondent's completed Redetermination (DHS-1010) form where he reported to the Department that no one in his benefit group had been convicted of a drug-related felony. Exhibit A, pp 72-77.
9. On February 16, 2007, Respondent pled guilty to Possession of a Controlled Substance Less Than 25 Grams. Exhibit A, pp 78-80.
10. Respondent failed to report to the Department that he had pled guilty on July 7, 2009, to Attempted Delivery/manufacture of a Controlled Substance Less Than 50 Grams. Exhibit A, p 81-82.
11. Respondent received Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits totaling \$ [REDACTED] from November 1, 2012, through March 31, 2016. Exhibit A, pp 83-88.
12. On August 22, 2016, the Department sent the Respondent an Intentional Program Violation Repayment Agreement (DHS-4350) with notice of a \$ [REDACTED] overpayment, and a Request for Waiver of Disqualification Hearing (DHS-826). Exhibit A, pp 5-8.
13. This was Respondent's first alleged IPV.
14. The Department's OIG filed a hearing request on August 22, 2016, to establish an OI of benefits received by Respondent as a result of Respondent having allegedly committed an IPV. Exhibit A, p 2.

15. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent at the last known address and was not returned by the United States Postal Service as undeliverable.

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 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-.3011.

The Department's OIG requests IPV hearings for the following cases:

- FAP trafficking OIs 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 OI amount for the FIP, SDA, CDC, MA and FAP programs is \$500 or more, **or**
 - the total OI 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.

Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 720 (January 1, 2016), pp 12-13.

Overissuance

When a client group receives more benefits than they are entitled to receive, the Department must attempt to recoup the OI. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 720 (January 1, 2016), p 1.

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 August 22, 1996. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 203 (October 1, 2015), p 2.

On an application for assistance dated November 1, 2012, the Respondent acknowledged the duty to report any drug-related felonies to the Department. Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement. On his November 1, 2012, application for assistance, Respondent reported to the Department that no one in his benefit group had been convicted of a drug-related felony. During his eligibility interview, Respondent told his caseworker that he had been convicted of one drug-related felony in 2007. A person with one drug-related felony conviction occurring after August 22, 1996, is eligible for FAP benefits with an Authorized Representative on his benefit case, but a person with more than one drug-related felony is permanently disqualified from FAP.

Respondent received a monthly allotment of FAP benefits from the date he submitted his application on November 1, 2012, through October 31, 2013, with a \$ [REDACTED] monthly allotment in each of those months for a total of \$ [REDACTED] of FAP benefits.

Respondent's FAP benefits then apparently closed for some reason not included in the hearing record. Respondent submitted an application for FAP benefits on February 23, 2014, and the hearing record does not indicate that this application was denied, but it appears that no benefits were issued. Respondent must have submitted another application for benefits in August of 2014, which was not entered into the record as evidence. Respondent received a total of \$ [REDACTED] of FAP benefits from August of 2014, through January 31, 2015. Respondent's FAP benefits apparently closed after January 1, 2015, and he must have reapplied in February of 2016, because he received \$ [REDACTED] of FAP benefits from February 1, 2016, through March 31, 2016.

The hearing record indicates that Respondent received FAP benefits totaling \$ [REDACTED] from November 1, 2012, through March 31, 2016. Although Respondent was not eligible for any of those benefits the Department sent him a DHS-4350 with notice of a \$ [REDACTED] overissuance of FAP benefits. Therefore, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the Department established a \$ [REDACTED] overissuance of FAP benefits.

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, 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).

The Department has the burden of establishing by clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV). The clear and convincing evidence standard, which is the most demanding standard applied in civil cases, is established where there is evidence so clear, direct and weighty and convincing that a conclusion can be drawn without hesitancy of the truth of the precise facts in issue. *Smith v Anonymous Joint Enterprise*, 487 Mich 102; 793 NW2d 533 (2010), reh den 488 Mich 860; 793 NW2d 559 (2010).

Clear and convincing proof is that which produces in the mind of the trier of fact a firm belief or conviction as to the truth of the precise facts in issue. Evidence may be uncontroverted and yet not be clear and convincing. Conversely, evidence may be clear and convincing even if contradicted. *Id.*

Respondent applied for FAP benefits on November 1, 2012, and initially claimed to have no drug-related felony convictions occurring after August 22, 1996. Respondent changed his story during his eligibility interview and claimed to have only 1 drug-related felony convictions. This information was also false, because the hearing record evidence supports a finding that Respondent pled guilty to two separate drug-related felonies with each occurring after August 22, 1996. Respondent would have been eligible to receive FAP benefits with an authorized representative on his case with one drug-related felony, but would have been permanently disqualified from FAP if he had admitted to more than one drug-related felony conviction.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Department has presented clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent intentionally failed to report a second drug-

related felony for the purpose of becoming eligible for FAP benefits. Respondent then concealed his drug-related felonies for the purposes of maintaining his eligibility for FAP benefits that he would not have been eligible for otherwise.

Disqualification

A court or hearing decision that finds a client committed IPV disqualifies that client from receiving program benefits. BAM 720, p. 15-16. 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.

Clients who commit an IPV are disqualified for a standard disqualification period except when a court orders a different period, or except when the OI relates to MA. BAM 720, p. 13. Refusal to repay will not cause denial of current or future MA if the client is otherwise eligible. BAM 710 (July 1, 2013), p. 2. Clients are disqualified for periods of one year for the first IPV, two years for the second IPV, lifetime disqualification for the third IPV, and ten years for a FAP concurrent receipt of benefits. BAM 720, p. 16.

The record evidence indicates that this is Respondent's first alleged IPV violation.

The Department has established an Intentional Program Violation (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, 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 Food Assistance Program (FAP) program benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED]
3. The Department is ORDERED to initiate recoupment procedures for the amount of \$ [REDACTED] in accordance with Department policy.
4. It is FURTHER ORDERED that Respondent be disqualified from the Food Assistance Program (FAP) for a period of 12 months.

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]

Petitioner

[Redacted]

Respondent

[Redacted]