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GOVERNOR

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

SHELLY EDGERTON
DIRECTOR



Date Mailed: May 18, 2017
MAHS Docket No.: 16-016277
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [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 April 19, 2017, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED] Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). The Respondent did not appear at the hearing and it was held in the 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 the 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 the 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 March 20, 2013, the Respondent acknowledged his duties and responsibilities including the duty to report any change of residency and the duty to report starting employment. Exhibit A, pp 10-41.

2. Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement.
3. Respondent began using his Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits in [REDACTED] on March 28, 2014, and used them in West Virginia exclusively through July 21, 2014. Exhibit A, pp 44-47.
4. Respondent failed to report starting employment on March 29, 2014, where he had reported a [REDACTED] address to his employer as his home address. Exhibit A, pp 49-50.
5. Respondent received Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits from May 1, 2014, through July 31, 2014. Exhibit A, pp 42-43.
6. On October 4, 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.
7. The Department's OIG filed a hearing request on October 4, 2016, to establish an OI of benefits received by Respondent as a result of Respondent having allegedly committed an IPV. Exhibit A, p 2.
8. This was Respondent's first established IPV.
9. 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.

To be eligible for Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits, a person must be a Michigan resident. A person is considered a resident under the Food Assistance Program (FAP) while living in Michigan for any purpose other than a vacation, even if there is no intent to remain in the state permanently or indefinitely. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 220 (January 1, 2016), p 1.

On an application for assistance dated March 20, 2013, Respondent acknowledged the duty to report any change of residency to the Department as well as the duty to report starting new employment. The Respondent was a Food Assistance Program (FAP) recipient from May 1, 2014, through July 32, 2014. The Respondent began using Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits in West Virginia on March 28, 2014, and used them exclusively in West Virginia through July 21, 2014. The use of benefits in another state is evidence of a lack of intent to remain a Michigan resident. Accepting employment in another state is further evidence of a lack of intent to remain a Michigan resident. If Respondent had reported that he was no longer a Michigan resident as of February 28, 2014, then the Department would have closed his FAP benefits by the benefit period after April 1, 2014. Furthermore, the earned income Respondent began receiving in August of 2014, was not applied towards his eligibility for FAP benefits.

As a West Virginia resident not living in Michigan, Respondent was not eligible for any of the \$ [REDACTED] of FAP benefits he received from May 1, 2104, through July 31, 2014. Therefore, Respondent received 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.*

On an application for assistance dated March 20, 2013, Respondent acknowledged his duties and responsibilities including the duties to report any change of residency to the Department as well as his duty to report starting employment. Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement. If Respondent had reported that he had become a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] resident and was no longer living in Michigan, the Department would have closed his FAP benefits. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Department has

presented clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent intentionally failed to report that he was no longer a Michigan resident living in Michigan for the purposes of remaining eligible 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 established 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 the Respondent committed an IPV.
2. The Respondent did receive an OI of Food Assistance Program (FAP) 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 the 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]