



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

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

SHELLY EDGERTON
DIRECTOR

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Date Mailed: June 8, 2017
MAHS Docket No.: 17-001427
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: [REDACTED]
Respondent: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Zainab A. Baydoun

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 May 22, 2017, from Detroit, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Respondent did not appear at the hearing. There was no request for adjournment made by Respondent prior to the scheduled hearing date and no request made by Respondent prior to the scheduled hearing date to participate in the hearing via three-way telephone. Thus, the hearing 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).

On May 24, 2017, and subsequent to the closure of the hearing record on May 22, 2017, Respondent submitted a request for adjournment, indicating he was unable to make it to his hearing on May 22, 2017. Rule 1011 of the Administrative Hearing Rules, Mich Admin Code, R 792.11011(2), for the Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS) provides that a request for adjournment must be submitted to the hearing system in writing and received by the hearing system in writing prior to the date and time of the scheduled hearing. Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 600 further provides that for FAP Intentional Program Violation only, MAHS must grant an adjournment of a scheduled hearing *if* the client makes the request at least 10 days in advance of the hearing. BAM 600 (April 2017), p. 11-12. Additionally, the Notice of Disqualification Hearing mailed to Respondent by MAHS on April 20, 2017, which advised him of the date and time for the scheduled hearing, further advised him that if on the day of hearing he cannot participate, he must telephone MAHS immediately. Thus, because Petitioner's written adjournment request was not received prior to the date and time of the scheduled hearing and because Respondent did not establish that

he telephoned MAHS on the day of the hearing, Respondent's request for adjournment submitted to and received by MAHS on May 24, 2017, is DENIED.

ISSUES

1. Did the Department establish, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) of the Food Assistance Program (FAP)?
2. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving FAP benefits?
3. Did Respondent receive an overissuance (OI) of FAP benefits that the Department is entitled to recoup?

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 or around January 31, 2017, 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 his drug related felony convictions.
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 July 1, 2014, to August 31, 2016 (fraud period).
7. The Department alleges that during the fraud period, Respondent was issued ██████ in FAP benefits by the State of Michigan, and the Department alleges that Respondent was entitled to \$0 in such benefits during this time period.
8. The Department alleges that Respondent received an OI of FAP benefits in the amount of ██████.
9. This was Respondent's first alleged IPV.

10. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent on or around April 20, 2017, at the last known address and was not returned by the US Post Office as undeliverable.
11. The hearing was held as scheduled and the record closed on May 22, 2017.
12. MAHS received Respondent's Request for Adjournment on May 24, 2017. Respondent's Request for Adjournment was not timely filed prior to the hearing date.

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 \$500.00 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.5, 12-13.

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), pp. 7-8; 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 the FAP because he misrepresented his circumstances on several redeterminations by failing to disclose that he had two drug related felony convictions each occurring after August 22, 1996. Clients must completely and truthfully answer all questions on forms and in interviews. BAM 105 (April 2014/April 2016), pp.8-9. People convicted of certain crimes and probation or parole violators are not eligible for assistance. BEM 203 (July 2014/October 2015), p. 1. Effective October 1, 2011, an individual convicted of a felony for the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances will be permanently disqualified from receipt of FAP if (i) the terms of probation or parole are violated and the qualifying conviction occurred after August 22, 1996 or (ii) the individual was convicted two or more times and both offenses occurred after August 22, 1996. BEM 203, p. 2. The offense must be classified as a felony by the law of the State and have as

an element the possession, use or distribution of a controlled substance. 21 USC 862a(a).

The Department presented documentation including [REDACTED] detailing Respondent's two drug related felony convictions, each of which occurred after August 22, 1996. (Exhibit A, pp. 28-32). According to the records provided, Respondent had two drug related felony convictions after August 22, 1996, specifically in July 1999 in [REDACTED] for controlled substance-delivery/manufacture (narcotic or cocaine), less than 50 grams; and in May 2006 in [REDACTED] for controlled substance-delivery/manufacture marijuana. The cited statutory grounds for the convictions in the documents presented by the Department establish that Respondent had two felony drug convictions. Both convictions have possession, use or distribution of a controlled substance as an element.

The Department also presented three redeterminations submitted by Respondent on July 29, 2014, July 31, 2015, and June 2, 2016. A review of the redeterminations indicates that Respondent answered "no" to the questions asking whether he had been convicted of a drug felony and whether he had been convicted more than once. (Exhibit A, pp. 10-27). The redeterminations clearly instruct Respondent to provide true and complete information, as well as the penalties for failing to do so.

Therefore, because Respondent did not identify his drug related felony convictions on any of the three redeterminations he completed, the Department's evidence establishes, by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent was advised of his responsibility to accurately report his circumstances, and that Respondent intentionally withheld information that if properly disclosed, would have made him ineligible for FAP benefits. Under these circumstances, the Department has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV of the FAP.

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. Clients are disqualified for ten years for a FAP IPV involving concurrent receipt of benefits, and, for all other IPV cases involving FAP, 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. 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. Because this was Respondent's first IPV, he is subject to a one-year disqualification under the FAP.

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 a FAP OI is the benefit amount the client actually received minus the amount the client was eligible to receive. BAM 720, p. 8; BAM 715 (January 2016), p. 6; BAM 705 (January 2016), p. 6.

In this case, the Department alleged that Respondent was issued FAP benefits in the amount of [REDACTED] between July 2014 and August 2016, and that due to his drug related felony convictions, was ineligible for any FAP benefits during this period. A review of the FAP benefit summary inquiry presented by the Department establishes that the State of Michigan issued [REDACTED] in FAP benefits to Respondent during the fraud period. (Exhibit A, pp. 33-36). Because, as discussed above, Respondent was ineligible for FAP benefits, as he was subject to a permanent disqualification from the FAP, the Department is entitled to recoup [REDACTED] from Respondent, which is the difference between the amount of FAP benefits actually issued to him and the amount he was eligible to receive during the fraud period.

DECISION AND ORDER

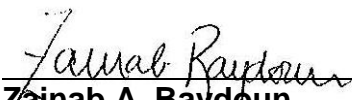
The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, concludes that:

1. Respondent's May 24, 2017, request for adjournment is DENIED.
2. The Department **has** established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV of the FAP.
3. Respondent **did** receive an OI of program benefits in the amount of [REDACTED] from the FAP.

The Department is ORDERED to initiate recoupment/collection procedures for the amount of [REDACTED] in accordance with Department policy, less any amount already recouped/collected.

It is FURTHER ORDERED that Respondent be disqualified from the FAP for a period of 12 months.

ZB/tm



Zainab A. Baydoun
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]
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CC:

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