



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: July 6, 2017
MAHS Docket No.: 17-001317
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Lynn M. Ferris

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, 42 CFR 431.230(b), 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 represented by himself.

ISSUES

1. Did Respondent receive an overissuance (OI) of Food Assistance (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 any drug-related felony convictions occurring after August 22, 1996, to the Department within 10 days and to report information provided to the Department when completing an application correctly and accurately and to report same during redeterminations.
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 received those benefits and was entitled to \$ [REDACTED] in such benefits during this time period.
8. The Department alleges that Respondent received an OI of his FAP benefits and thus, received an OI in 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 October 1, 2014, 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 \$500.00 or more, or
 - the total amount is less than \$500.00, 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 2017), p. 1.

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 (October 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.

BEM 203 provides that as recipients of FAP are disqualified from receiving benefits after two drug-related felony convictions:

FIP and FAP

1st Offense

A person who has been convicted of a felony for the use, possession, or distribution of controlled substances is disqualified if:

- Terms of probation or parole are violated, **and**
- The qualifying conviction occurred after August 22, 1996.

If an individual is not in violation of the terms of probation or parole:

- FIP benefits must be paid in the form of restricted payments.
- Receipt of FAP benefits requires an authorized representative.

2nd Offense

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. BEM 203(October 1, 2015), p. 2. Originally effective October 11, 2011.

In this case, in support of its contention that Respondent committed an IPV, the Department presented a redetermination completed for FAP benefits where the Respondent answered “no” to the question “Convicted of a Drug Felony?” dated [REDACTED], Exhibit A, p. 16, and on an a redetermination dated [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the Respondent answered “no” to the questions “Convicted of a Drug Felony?” and “Convicted more than once?” Exhibit A, p. 15. On the second Redetermination, the Respondent’s mother was listed as his Authorized Representative. On a third document, a redetermination dated [REDACTED], again the answers to the drug related felony convictions question and the convicted more than once question were both answered “no.” See Exhibit A, p. 25.

The Respondent testified that the signatures on all three applications referenced above which appeared to be the same signature, were not his signatures and that his sister was authorized by him to apply for FAP benefits on his behalf. His testimony established that he was aware that applications and other documents were filed on his behalf and signed on his behalf. In addition, the Respondent also testified that he never was interviewed by a caseworker for any of the redeterminations. The undersigned inquired of the Respondent during the hearing regarding whether he required assistance in completing an application, to determine whether he was capable of completing an application and he answered he was capable of completing an application and was able to read. Even though the Respondent may not have signed the redeterminations referenced above, his testimony established that he authorized others to apply for FAP benefits on his behalf. Thus, he is responsible for answering the questions and the answers given the Department. In addition, the Respondent’s testimony that he was never interviewed by a Department caseworker during any the

redeterminations is not credible as Department policy requires an interview; and the Respondent is the only member of his FAP group being reviewed at redetermination.

In addition, the Department provided evidence which demonstrated that Respondent had been convicted of two drug-related felonies after August 22, 1996. The Department presented a Register of Actions indicating that Petitioner was convicted of a drug-related felony on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] County by the [REDACTED] County Circuit Court. Exhibit A, p. 27. The Respondent was also convicted of a drug-related felony on [REDACTED], in [REDACTED] County by the [REDACTED] County Circuit Court. Exhibit A, p. 29. Based upon the evidence presented, the Respondent was ineligible for FAP Benefits after the second felony drug conviction on [REDACTED]. The Respondent did not dispute the convictions.

Given that all the redeterminations were submitted after the two convictions occurred, it is found that the Department has established an IPV and that Respondent intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of maintaining FAP benefits by clear and convincing evidence.

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, (October 1, 2015) p. 15. Clients are disqualified for ten 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. A disqualified recipient remains a member of an active group as long as he/she lives with them, and other eligible group members may continue to receive benefits. BAM 720, p. 16.

In this case, the Department satisfied its burden of showing by clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent committed an IPV concerning FAP benefits. Accordingly, Respondent is subject to a disqualification under the FAP program.

Overissuance

When a client group receives more benefits than entitled to receive, the Department must attempt to recoup the OI. BAM 700, p. 1. Individuals convicted of certain crimes, such as trafficking and drug-related felonies; probation or parole violators; and fugitive felons are not eligible for FAP or SDA assistance. BEM 203 (October 2015), p. 1.

In this case, the Department is seeking an OI related to benefits issued from [REDACTED]. The Department alleged that the OI amount is \$[REDACTED]. The Department presented Respondent's Benefit Summary Inquiry, which showed that Respondent was issued FAP benefits in the amount of \$[REDACTED] during the fraud period. See Exhibit A, pp. 31-34.

Respondent failed to refute the evidence presented, which revealed that he had been convicted of two drug related felonies since August 22, 1996. Additionally, 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. BEM 203, p. 2. Had the Department been aware of Respondent's two drug-related felonies at the time of redeterminations completed on his behalf, FAP benefits would have been denied. Accordingly, the Department established that Respondent was not entitled to benefits, and as such, received an OI of FAP benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] 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. The Department **has** established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV.
2. Respondent **did** receive an OI of program benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] from the following program(s) Food Assistance.

The Department is ORDERED to initiate recoupment/collection procedures for the amount of \$ [REDACTED] in accordance with Department policy.

It is FURTHER ORDERED that Respondent be disqualified from receiving Food Assistance benefits for a period of **12 months**.

LMF/jaf



Lynn M. Ferris
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

Petitioner

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Respondent

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

DHHS

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]