



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM

SHELLY EDGERTON
DIRECTOR

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Date Mailed: April 23, 2018
MAHS Docket No.: 17-015139
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Amanda M. T. Marler

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 April 18, 2018, 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; 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 Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV)?
3. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving benefits for the 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 October 18, 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 not to buy, sell, trade, exchange, or otherwise traffic FAP benefits.
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 incident which it is considering fraudulent occurred on October 30, 2016 (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 was entitled to \$ [REDACTED] in such benefits during this time period.
8. The Department alleges that Respondent received an OI in FAP benefits as a result of trafficking 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 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), 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 (October 2017), pp. 5, 12-13; ASM 165 (August 2016).

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), 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 her FAP benefits because she attempted to sell FAP benefits through text message and online using her Facebook account. Trafficking is the buying or selling of FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food. BAM 700, p. 1. Trafficking also includes (i) fraudulently using, transferring, altering, acquiring, or possessing coupons, authorization cards, or access devices, or (ii) redeeming or presenting for payment coupons known to be fraudulently obtained or transferred. BEM 203 (October 2015), p. 3. The federal regulations define trafficking to include “attempting to buy, sell, steal, or otherwise affect an exchange of [FAP] benefits issued and accessed via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) . . . for cash or consideration other than eligible food, either directly, indirectly, in complicity or collusion with others, or acting alone.” 7 CFR 271.2. In this case, the Department established that it adequately notified Respondent at the time of application that she could not buy, sell, exchange, or otherwise traffick her FAP benefits (Exhibit A, p. 36).

The Department alleges that Respondent attempted to sell FAP benefits through a text message to her cousin. In the text, Respondent asks her cousin “You wanna buy some stamps” and provides her GPS location to the cousin. Stamps is a colloquial name for FAP benefits as the FAP program was previously known as the Food Stamp Program. The cousin had Respondent listed with a contact name “Cousin [REDACTED]”. Through her Facebook messenger, Respondent again messaged her cousin and stated “What’s your number I got \$250 worth of stamps for sale but it don’t come on until the 5th but my I lost my money card so I’m broke for the week until they mail me another one.” The Facebook profile name of Respondent is [REDACTED]. When Respondent spoke with the OIG Regulation Agent, she guessed that it was her cousin who had turned her in to the Department. Respondent’s statement to the OIG agent coupled with the messages and contact or usernames establish that Respondent was attempting to sell her FAP benefits.

As discussed above, attempting to sell FAP benefits is a form of trafficking. Respondent’s attempt to sell stamps is trafficking. Trafficking is an intentional program violation. BAM 720, p. 1. The Department has met its burden of proof in establishing an IPV.

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 10 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. This was Respondent's first IPV. Therefore, she 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 OI amount for a trafficking-related IPV is the value of the trafficked benefits as determined by (i) a court decision, (ii) the individual's admission, or (iii) documentation used to establish the trafficking determination, such as an affidavit from a store owner or sworn testimony from a federal or state investigator of how much a client could have reasonably trafficked in that store, which can be established through circumstantial evidence. BAM 720, p. 8.

As discussed above, the Department presented clear and convincing evidence to support its allegation that Respondent trafficked FAP benefits through text and Facebook messages. Respondent solicited \$ [REDACTED] worth of FAP benefits and was a recipient of FAP benefits at the time of the messages. Therefore, Respondent's attempt to solicit \$ [REDACTED] worth of FAP benefits results in an OI of \$ [REDACTED]. The Department is entitled to recoup or collect \$ [REDACTED].

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 **received** 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.

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



AM/

Amanda M. T. Marler

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]

DHHS

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Respondent

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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