



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 30, 2018  
MAHS Docket No.: 17-016729  
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 26, 2018, from Detroit, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). The Respondent was self-represented.

**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 December 5, 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 truthfully and accurately answer all questions on the Application for 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 time period it is considering the fraud period is April 2016 through November 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 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 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 she misrepresented her circumstances by failing to disclose that she had two or more 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 (July 2015), p. 8. People convicted of certain crimes and probation or parole violators are not eligible for assistance. BEM 203 (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 (which is defined as actual, constructive, or attempted delivery) of a controlled substance. 21 USC 862a(a); 21 USC 802(8) and (11). The disqualification does not apply if the conviction is for conduct occurring on or before August 22, 1996. 21 USC 862a(d)(2).

The Department presented documentation including two Registers of Actions from the Genesee Circuit Court detailing Respondent's criminal history. (Exhibit A, pp. 28-42). Respondent's first conviction was on [REDACTED], for Controlled Substance-possession of methamphetamine. Respondent was sentenced to the drug court program without the option of case dismissal upon completion of the program. In the second case, Respondent plead guilty to Controlled Substance-possession of methamphetamine. In the second case, Respondent pled guilty to Controlled Substance-possession of narcotic or cocaine less than 25 grams on [REDACTED]. As part of her sentencing, she was again sentenced to the drug court program. The Register of Action notes that Respondent was sentenced to the program "as a term of probation & no dismissal for a plea of guilty in circuit court..." However, Respondent also provided a letter from the Genesee County Drug Court dated January 23, 2018, which indicates that Respondent was not notified until October 20, 2016, that her case would not be dismissed upon completion of the program. Dismissal or reduction of a charge for a defendant upon successful completion of the drug court program is a decision of the county prosecutor's office and the judge. MLC 600.1076(4).

The cited statutory grounds for each case in the documents presented establish that each was a felony and each case had possession, use, or distribution of a controlled substance as an element.

In support of its contention that Respondent committed an IPV, the Department presented an Application signed and submitted by the Respondent on March 3, 2016, on which Respondent indicated that she had one but not more than one felony drug conviction. (Exhibit A, pp. 46-47). The Application clearly instructed Respondent to provide true and complete information, as well as the penalties for failing to do so. However, Respondent credibly testified that she was uncertain how to answer the question regarding more than one conviction because of her involvement in the drug court program. Respondent credibly testified that she contacted the Department and spoke with an eligibility specialist regarding the situation. She was advised to answer "no" to more than one conviction and then they would follow up on the issue. At the time of this call, Respondent had not yet been assigned a regular case worker/eligibility specialist.

In reviewing all of the evidence, Respondent's confusion about her conviction status is warranted, and her actions do not appear to be one in which she was intentionally trying to mislead the Department. She simply did not know how to answer the question, and the question could not be easily answered with a "yes" or a "no".

Therefore, the Department has not met its burden of proof in establishing by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed 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 **not** satisfied its burden of showing that Respondent committed an IPV. Therefore, she is **not** subject to a period of disqualification from 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] from April 2016 through November 2016, and that due to her drug-related felony convictions, she was ineligible for any FAP benefits during this period. A review of the Respondent's Benefit Summary Inquiry presented by the Department supports benefits issued in the amount alleged. (Exhibit A, p. 27). As discussed above, Respondent was ineligible for FAP benefits if she had two felony drug convictions. In this case, Respondent pled guilty to felony drug charges on [REDACTED], and [REDACTED], then was sentenced to drug court. The conviction date is the date of her plea, not her sentencing or completion of drug court. While drug court presents the possibility of a reduction in the charge or dismissal of the case upon its completion, there was no evidence presented that the charge was ultimately reduced or dismissed. Since Respondent had two felony drug convictions, she was not eligible for FAP benefits. The Department is entitled to recoup \$ [REDACTED] from Respondent, which is the difference between the amount of FAP benefits actually issued to her and the amount she 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. The Department **has not** established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV.
2. Respondent **received** 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 is **not** subject to a period of disqualification from the FAP.



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

**DHHS**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Petitioner**

[REDACTED]

**Respondent**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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