



RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

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

SHELLY EDGERTON  
DIRECTOR

[REDACTED]

Date Mailed: May 24, 2018  
MAHS Docket No.: 17-016376  
Agency No.: [REDACTED]  
Petitioner: OIG  
Respondent: [REDACTED]

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Jeffrey Kemm

**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 Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), particularly 7 CFR 273.16. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on May 22, 2018, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by [REDACTED], Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). The Respondent did not appear. The hearing was held in Respondent's absence pursuant to 7 CFR 273.16(e).

**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 FAP benefits?

**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 April 21, 2014, Respondent applied for FAP benefits.
2. The Department found Respondent eligible for FAP benefits based on the information he provided in his application.

3. The Department sent Respondent an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card with a pamphlet titled Important Things to Know (DHS-PUB-1010) and a brochure titled How to Use Your Bridge Card.
4. The Things to Know pamphlet advised Respondent that trading or selling FAP benefits was considered FAP trafficking.
5. The How to Use Your Bridge Card brochure advised Respondent that misuse of food benefits is a violation of law, including allowing a retailer to buy FAP benefits in exchange for cash.
6. Respondent did not have any apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit his understanding or ability to fulfill his responsibilities to the Department.
7. From January of 2015 through May of 2015, Respondent used his FAP benefits at [REDACTED] to complete multiple EBT transactions which were close in time to each other and for unusual amounts.
8. [REDACTED] is a convenience store located in a non-residential area, with approximately 2,500 square feet of space, no shopping carts or baskets, very limited food inventory, non-food household supply inventory, liquor inventory, tobacco inventory, one cash register, and a turn-style carousel required to complete transactions.
9. The United States Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) conducted an investigation of [REDACTED].
10. The FNS examined EBT transaction records for [REDACTED] and found that [REDACTED] had transactions indicative of trafficking because there were an unusual number of transactions ending in the same cents value, multiple transactions were from the same individual benefit accounts in unusually short time frames, the majority or all of individual recipient benefits were exhausted in unusually short periods of time, and excessively large purchase transactions were made from recipient accounts.
11. On September 3, 2015, the FNS notified [REDACTED] that it suspected the business of FAP trafficking and that it was charging the business with trafficking pursuant to 7 CFR 271.2.
12. On October 19, 2015, the FNS notified [REDACTED] that FNS had concluded that [REDACTED] engaged in trafficking and that it was permanently disqualified from participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
13. The Department reviewed the analytics used by FNS in its investigation, which included EBT transactions made by Respondent.

14. The Department conducted an investigation of Respondent's EBT transactions at [REDACTED].
15. The Department determined that Respondent trafficked FAP benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] at [REDACTED].
16. On November 13, 2017, the Department's OIG filed a hearing request to establish an OI of benefits received by Respondent as a result of Respondent having allegedly committed an IPV.
17. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent at his last known address and it was not returned by the United States Postal Service as undeliverable.
18. The OIG requested Respondent be disqualified from receiving program benefits for 12 months for a first IPV.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Department policies are contained in the Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), 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.

### **Intentional Program Violation**

An IPV is suspected for a client who is alleged to have trafficked FAP benefits. BAM 720 (October 1, 2017), p. 1.

Trafficking is:

- The buying, selling or stealing or otherwise effecting an exchange of FAP benefits issued and accessed via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, card numbers and personal identification numbers (PINs), or by manual voucher and signature, for cash or consideration other than eligible food, either directly, indirectly, in complicity or collusion with others, or acting alone.
- The exchange of firearms, ammunition, explosives, or controlled substances, as defined in section 802 of title 21, United States Code, for FAP benefits.

- Purchasing a product with FAP benefits that has a container requiring a return deposit with the intent of obtaining cash by discarding the product and returning the container for the deposit amount, intentionally discarding the product, and intentionally returning the container for the deposit amount.
- Purchasing a product with FAP benefits with the intent of obtaining cash or consideration other than eligible food by reselling the product, and subsequently intentionally reselling the product purchased with FAP benefits in exchange for cash or consideration other than eligible food.
- Intentionally purchasing products originally purchased with FAP benefits in exchange for cash or consideration other than eligible food.
- Attempting to buy, sell, steal, or otherwise affect an exchange of FAP benefits issued and accessed via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, card numbers and personal identification numbers (PINs), or by manual voucher and signatures, for cash or consideration other than eligible food, either directly, indirectly, in complicity or collusion with others, or acting alone.

BAM 700 (January 1, 2018), p. 2.

An IPV requires that the Department establish by clear and convincing evidence that the client has trafficked FAP benefits. BAM 720, p. 1; see also 7 CFR 273(e)(6). Clear and convincing evidence is evidence which is so clear, direct, weighty, and convincing that it enables a firm belief as to the truth of the allegations sought to be established. *In re Martin*, 450 Mich 204, 227; 538 NW2d 399 (1995) (citing *In re Jobes*, 108 NJ 394 (1987)).

In this case, I find that the Department has met its burden. The Department established that Respondent made EBT transactions at [REDACTED] that were indicative of trafficking. FNS determined that [REDACTED] was engaged in FAP trafficking, and Respondent completed multiple EBT transactions at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] which were close in time to each other and for unusual amounts. Respondent did not provide any explanation for his EBT transactions at [REDACTED]

### **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. 16. 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/she lives with

them, and other eligible group members may continue to receive benefits. BAM 720, p. 16.

In this case, there is no evidence that Respondent has ever been found to have committed an IPV related to FAP benefits. Thus, this is Respondent's first IPV related to FAP benefits. Therefore, Respondent is subject to a one-year disqualification.

### **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 trafficking-related IPV is the value of the trafficked benefits (attempted or actually trafficked) as determined by: (1) a court decision; (2) the individual's admission; or (3) 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. BAM 720, p. 8. This can be established through circumstantial evidence. BAM 720, p. 8. In this case, the Department established that Respondent trafficked FAP benefits valued at \$ [REDACTED]. Thus, Respondent received an overissuance of \$ [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 did receive an OI of FAP benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED].

IT IS ORDERED THAT the Department may initiate recoupment procedures for the amount of \$ [REDACTED] in accordance with Department policy.

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

JK/nr



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Jeffrey Kemm  
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) 763-0155; 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]