



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

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

SHELLY EDGERTON
DIRECTOR

[REDACTED]
MI [REDACTED]

Date Mailed: July 9, 2018
MAHS Docket No.: 18-000741
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 July 5, 2018, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by Clarice Bridges, Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Respondent, [REDACTED] did not appear. The hearing was held in Respondent's absence pursuant to 7 CFR 273.16(e)(4).

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 July 12, 2016, Respondent applied for assistance from the department, including FAP benefits.
2. In the application Respondent submitted on July 12, 2016, the Department advised Respondent that he "may be guilty of fraud/IPV if you trade, attempt to trade or sell your FAP benefits or Bridge card online or in person."

3. In the application Respondent submitted on July 12, 2016, Respondent identified himself as a black or African American male with a date of birth of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1990.
4. After Respondent applied for benefits, the Department sent Respondent a pamphlet titled Important Things to Know (DHS-PUB-1010) and a brochure titled How to Use Your Bridge Card.
5. The Things to Know pamphlet advised Respondent that trading or selling FAP benefits was considered FAP trafficking.
6. The How to Use Your Bridge Card brochure advised Respondent that misuse of food benefits is a violation of law, including trading or selling FAP benefits.
7. Respondent did not have any apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit his understanding or ability to fulfill his responsibilities to the Department.
8. On February 8, 2017, an individual identified as "[REDACTED] [REDACTED]" made a Facebook post that stated, "I got 600 on the bridge card who want."
9. On February 11, 2017, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] made a Facebook post that stated, "Got a bridge card on deck 180."
10. The Facebook photos of [REDACTED] [REDACTED] identified a young black or African American male. The Facebook posts on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] profile indicated his birth date was [REDACTED] (On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2016, he posted that "tomorrow my bday..truly bless"). [REDACTED] [REDACTED] wished an individual named "[REDACTED]" a happy birthday on [REDACTED] and referred to her as his "baby sis."
11. The Department conducted an investigation when it discovered the Facebook posts by [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
12. The Department determined that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Facebook profile belonged to Respondent because [REDACTED] [REDACTED] birthday, age, race, and gender matched Respondent's. The Department also found that Respondent was on a prior case with the Department in which he had a sister listed by the same name and birth date as referenced on his Facebook post.
13. On January 29, 2018, the Department's OIG filed a hearing request to establish that Respondent received an overissuance of benefits and that Respondent committed an IPV.
14. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent at his last known address and it was returned by the United States Postal Service as undeliverable.

15. 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 (January 1, 2016), p. 1.

Trafficking is:

- The buying, selling or stealing of FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food. Examples would be liquor, exchange of firearms, ammunition, explosives or controlled substances.
- Selling products purchased with FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food.
- Purchasing containers with deposits, dumping/discarding product and then returning containers to obtain cash refund deposits.
- Attempting to buy, sell or steal FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food.

BAM 700 (October 1, 2016), 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 presented sufficient evidence to establish that Respondent and the Facebook user known as "██████████ ██████████" were one and the same individual. Respondent made a post on Facebook through ██████████ ██████████ on February 8, 2017, which stated, "I got 600 on the bridge card who want." Respondent made another post on Facebook through ██████████ ██████████ on February 11, 2017, which stated, "Got a bridge card on deck 180." Respondent's posts clearly conveyed his intent to sell or trade FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food. Therefore, the Department established that Respondent engaged in the trafficking of FAP benefits.

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. In general, clients are disqualified 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 \$780.00 when he made a post soliciting interest in \$180 and \$600 bridge cards. Thus, Respondent received an overissuance of \$780.00.

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:

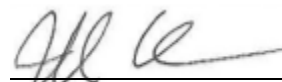
1. Respondent received an overissuance of FAP benefits in the amount of \$780.00 that the Department is entitled to recoup.

2. The Department has established, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent committed an IPV.
3. Respondent should be disqualified from receiving FAP benefits.

IT IS ORDERED THAT the Department may initiate recoupment procedures for the amount of \$780.00 in accordance with Department policy.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondent shall be disqualified from FAP benefits for a period of one year.

JK/nr



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

Deborah Little
5131 Grand River Ave.
Detroit, MI
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Wayne 49 County DHHS- via electronic
mail

MDHHS- Recoupment- via electronic mail

M. Shumaker- via electronic mail

Petitioner

OIG
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Respondent

[REDACTED]
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