



RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

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

SHELLY EDGERTON  
DIRECTOR

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] MI [REDACTED]

Date Mailed: September 4, 2018  
MAHS Docket No.: 18-003696  
Agency No.: [REDACTED]  
Petitioner: OIG  
Respondent: [REDACTED]

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Christian Gardocki**

**HEARING DECISION FOR  
INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION AND OVERISSUANCE**

Upon the request for a hearing by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), 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 scheduled for August 30, 2018, from Detroit, Michigan. The hearing was held on the scheduled hearing date and at least 30 minutes after the scheduled hearing time. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) was represented by Don Gardner, regulation agent with the Office of Inspector General. Respondent did not appear for the hearing.

The Notice of Hearing sent to Respondent's above address was returned as undeliverable. MDHHS testified that the above address was obtained from the MDHHS database which showed that Respondent received benefits in April 2017 at the above reported address. As a follow-up to the returned mail, MDHHS requested a CLEAR report for Respondent using Respondent's social security number, Credible MDHHS testimony indicated that the CLEAR report request was unsuccessful as Respondent's social security number led to a CLEAR report for an individual with a different name from Respondent.

Given the evidence, the above address for Respondent was the best available address for Respondent. Accordingly, the hearing proceeded under 7 CFR 273.16 (e)(3)(i) and BAM 720 which allow IPV hearings for Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits even when a Respondent may not receive notice of the hearing.

**ISSUES**

The first issue is whether MDHHS established that Respondent received an overissuance (OI) of benefits.

The second issue is whether MDHHS established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an intentional program violation (IPV) which justifies imposing a disqualification against Respondent.

### **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 [REDACTED] 2006, Respondent was convicted of “Controlled Substance-Possession (narcotic or Cocaine) Less than 25 Grams” under MCL 333.7403(2)(a)(v). (Exhibit A, pp. 39-40 and 45)
2. On [REDACTED] 2015, Respondent was convicted of “Controlled Substance-Delivery / manufacture (narcotic or Cocaine) Less than 50 Grams (Attempt)” under MCL 333.7401(2)(a)(iv). (Exhibit A, pp. 42-43)
3. On October 3, 2016, Respondent submitted to MDHHS a signed electronic application for Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits. Respondent answered “No” in response to questions asking if he was convicted of a drug felony and if he was convicted of a drug felony more than once. Boilerplate language stated that Respondent’s signature was certification, under penalties of perjury, that all reported information was accurate. (Exhibit A, pp. 10-37)
4. During all relevant times, Respondent had no apparent impairment to understanding or fulfilling reporting requirements.
5. From October 2016 through April 2017, Respondent received \$[REDACTED] in FAP benefits. (Exhibit A, pp. 52-53) Respondent’s eligibility was based on a one-person FAP group.
6. On April 16, 2018, MDHHS requested a hearing to establish that Respondent received an OI of \$[REDACTED] in FAP benefits from October 2016 through April 2017 and to establish an IPV disqualification of one year against Respondent. (Exhibit A, p. 1)
7. As of the date of hearing, Respondent had no known previous IPV disqualifications.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

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. MDHHS (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-.3011. MDHHS policies are contained in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), and Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

MDHHS' Hearing Summary and testimony alleged that Respondent received an OI totaling \$ [REDACTED] in FAP benefits based on Respondent's past drug felony convictions. MDHHS made similar or identical allegations in an Intentional Program Violation Repayment Agreement (Exhibit A, pp. 5-6) sent to Respondent as part of MDHHS' prehearing procedures.

When a client group receives more benefits than it is entitled to receive, MDHHS must attempt to recoup the overissuance. An overissuance is the amount of benefits issued to the client group in excess of what it was eligible to receive. Recoupment is an MDHHS action to identify and recover a benefit overissuance. BAM 700 (January 2016), pp. 1-2.<sup>1</sup>

For FAP benefits, people convicted of certain crimes and probation or parole violators are not eligible for assistance. 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 2015), pp. 1-2.<sup>2</sup>

MDHHS presented court documents which verified that Respondent was convicted of multiple crimes involving controlled substances. The court documents listed statutes corresponding to the crimes for which Respondent was convicted; each controlled substance crime for which Respondent was convicted is a felony under Michigan law. Offense dates were not verified, but Respondent's conviction dates were sufficiently after August 22, 1996, that it can be inferred that the corresponding offense dates also occurred after August 22, 1996.

MDHHS alleged a FAP-OI period from October 2016 through April 2017. Documents of Respondent's FAP issuance history listed FAP benefit issuances from October 2016 through April 2017 totaling \$ [REDACTED]. Presented evidence sufficiently verified that Respondent was the only group member during that time. As the only group member, a disqualification of Respondent would justify a total disqualification of FAP benefit eligibility.

The evidence established Respondent was convicted of multiple drug-related felonies which would have disqualified Respondent from FAP eligibility during the alleged OI period. MDHHS established that Respondent received \$ [REDACTED] in over-issued FAP benefits as a result of the disqualification not being applied. Thus, MDHHS established a basis for recoupment of \$ [REDACTED] in FAP benefits. MDHHS further alleged that the OI was caused by an IPV by Respondent justifying an IPV disqualification period.

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<sup>1</sup> See also 7 CFR 273.18(c)(1)(ii) for the corresponding federal regulations.

<sup>2</sup> See also 7 CFR 273.11(m) for the corresponding federal regulations.

An IPV is a benefit overissuance resulting from the willful withholding of information or other violation of law or regulation by the client or his authorized representative. Bridges Program Glossary (October 2015), p. 36. A 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 their reporting responsibilities. BAM 720 (January 2016), p. 1.<sup>3</sup>

IPV is suspected when there is **clear and convincing** [emphasis added] evidence that the client or CDC provider has intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of establishing, maintaining, increasing or preventing reduction of program benefits or eligibility. *Id.* 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. It is a standard which requires reasonable certainty of the truth; something that is highly probable. Black's Law Dictionary 888 (6th ed. 1990).

Court documents verified that Respondent was convicted twice for drug felonies. Respondent reported on an application having no past drug felony convictions. Boilerplate language on MDHHS reporting documents states that the client's signature is certification, subject to perjury, that all reported information on the document was true. The language is consistent with MDHHS policy which states that clients must completely and truthfully answer all questions on forms and in interviews (see BAM 105 (October 2016), p. 8). The evidence was not indicative that Respondent did not or could not understand the clear and correct reporting requirements.

The evidence established that Respondent misreported, in writing, a history of multiple drug felony convictions. Respondent's misreporting directly led to an OI of benefits. Generally, a client's written statement which contradicts known facts resulting in an OI is clear and convincing evidence of an intent to commit an IPV; Evidence was not presented to rebut the generality.

It is found MDHHS clearly and convincingly established that Respondent committed an IPV. Accordingly, MDHHS may proceed with disqualifying Respondent from benefit eligibility.

The standard disqualification period is used in all instances except when a court orders a different period. MDHHS is to apply the following disqualification periods to recipients

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<sup>3</sup> See also 7 CFR 253.8 for the corresponding federal regulations.


determined to have committed an IPV: one year for the first IPV, two years for the second IPV, and lifetime for the third IPV. BAM 725 (January 2016), p. 16.<sup>4</sup>

MDHHS did not allege Respondent previously committed an IPV. Thus, a one-year disqualification period is justified.

### **DECISION AND ORDER**

The administrative law judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds that MDHHS established that Respondent committed an IPV based on receipt of \$ [REDACTED] in over-issued FAP benefits for the period from October 2016 through April 2017. The MDHHS requests to establish an overissuance and a disqualification period of one year against Respondent are **APPROVED**.

CG/

  
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**Christian Gardocki**  
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

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<sup>4</sup> See also 7 CFR 253.8 (b) for the corresponding federal regulations.

**Petitioner**

MDHHS-OIG-Hearings

**DHHS**

Susan Noel  
MDHHS-Wayne-19-Hearings

**Respondent**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] MI [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

M Shumaker  
Policy Recoupment  
C Gardocki  
MAHS