



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
MICHIGAN OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS AND RULES

ORLENE HAWKS
DIRECTOR

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] NV [REDACTED]

Date Mailed: September 6, 2019
MOAHR Docket No.: 19-004013
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED] [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 September 5, 2019, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by Nicole Heinz-Hosking, Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG). Respondent, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] did not appear. The hearing was held in Respondent's absence pursuant to 7 CFR 273.16(e)(4).

One exhibit was admitted into evidence during the hearing. A 120-page packet of documents provided by the Department was admitted collectively as the Department's Exhibit A.

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 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. On August 10, 2007, Respondent pled guilty to a controlled substance felony in the [REDACTED]. The date the offense occurred was July 24, 2007.

2. On June 10, 2009, Respondent pled guilty to a controlled substance felony in the [REDACTED]. The date the offense occurred was December 19, 2008.
3. On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2011, Respondent applied for assistance from the Department, including FAP benefits. In the application, Respondent answered "No" when asked, "Has anyone [in your household] ever been convicted of a drug-related felony occurring after August 22, 1996?" Respondent also answered "No" when asked, "Convicted more than once?" Respondent signed his application and thereby affirmed that he understood the questions and that he provided true and complete information.
4. On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2012, Respondent applied for assistance from the Department, including FAP benefits. In the application, Respondent answered "No" when asked, "Has anyone [in your household] ever been convicted of a drug-related felony occurring after August 22, 1996?" Respondent also answered "No" when asked, "Convicted more than once?" Respondent signed his application and thereby affirmed that he understood the questions and that he provided true and complete information.
5. On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2012, Respondent applied for assistance from the Department, including FAP benefits. In the application, Respondent answered "No" when asked, "Has anyone [in your household] ever been convicted of a drug-related felony occurring after August 22, 1996?" Respondent also answered "No" when asked, "Convicted more than once?" Respondent signed his application and thereby affirmed that he understood the questions and that he provided true and complete information.
6. On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2013, Respondent completed a redetermination to renew his eligibility for FAP benefits. In the redetermination, Respondent answered "No" when asked, "Has anyone [in your household] ever been convicted of a drug-related felony occurring after August 22, 1996?" Respondent signed his redetermination and thereby affirmed that he understood the questions and that he provided true and complete information.
7. On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2014, Respondent applied for assistance from the Department, including FAP benefits. In the application, Respondent answered "Yes" when asked, "Has anyone [in your household] ever been convicted of a drug-related felony occurring after August 22, 1996?" Respondent also answered "No" when asked, "Convicted more than once?" Respondent signed his application and thereby affirmed that he understood the questions and that he provided true and complete information.
8. Respondent did not have any apparent physical or mental impairment which would have limited his understanding or his ability to answer the questions on his application truthfully and completely.

9. The Department approved Respondent for FAP benefits based on the information he provided in his application(s).
10. The Department later investigated Respondent's case and determined that Respondent had two or more felony drug convictions for offenses occurring after August 22, 1996, which he had not reported. The Department determined that it overissued Respondent \$5,167.00 in FAP benefits from December 2011 through April 2016.
11. On April 10, 2019, the Department's OIG filed a hearing request to establish that Respondent received an overissuance of benefits and that Respondent committed an IPV.
12. The OIG requested recoupment of a \$5,167.00 overissuance of FAP benefits, and the OIG requested that Respondent be disqualified from the Food Assistance Program for 12 months for a first IPV.
13. 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.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federal food assistance program designed to promote general welfare and to safeguard well-being by increasing food purchasing power. 7 USC 2011 and 7 CFR 271.1. The Department administers its Food Assistance Program (FAP) pursuant to MCL 400.10; the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b; and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3001 to .3015. 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).

Overissuance

A recipient claim is an amount owed because of benefits that were overpaid or benefits that were trafficked. 7 CFR 273.18(a)(1). When a client group receives more benefits than entitled to receive, the Department must attempt to recoup the overissuance. BAM 700 (October 1, 2018), p. 1.

In this case, the Department presented sufficient evidence to establish that Respondent received more FAP benefits than he was entitled to receive. The Department alleged that Respondent received more FAP benefits than he was entitled to receive because he had two unreported felony drug convictions for offenses occurring after August 22, 1996. An individual who has been convicted of two or more felony drug offenses which occurred after August 22, 1996, is ineligible for FAP benefits. 21 USC 862a and 2017 PA 107, Article X, Part 2, Section 619.

The Department presented sufficient evidence to establish that Respondent was convicted of two felony drug offenses which occurred after August 22, 1996. Respondent pled guilty to felony drug offenses in 2007 and 2009, and the Department obtained reliable information during its investigation that established that the offenses which Respondent was convicted of occurred after August 22, 1996. Respondent did not provide any contradictory information.

All FAP benefits issued to Respondent after the date of his second felony drug conviction, June 10, 2009, were overissued because Respondent was not entitled to any FAP benefits. The Department presented sufficient evidence to establish that Respondent was overissued FAP benefits from December 2011 through April 2016 in the total amount of \$5,167.00.

Intentional Program Violation

An intentional program violation (IPV) “shall consist of having intentionally: (1) Made a false or misleading statement, or misrepresented, concealed or withheld facts; or (2) Committed any act that constitutes a violation of SNAP, SNAP regulations, or any State statute for the purpose of using, presenting, transferring, acquiring, receiving, possessing or trafficking of SNAP benefits or EBT cards.” 7 CFR 273.16(c). 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. 7 CFR 273.16(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. Respondent failed to completely and truthfully answer all questions on his applications and redeterminations for assistance. In numerous applications and a redetermination, Respondent withheld information about his felony drug convictions when the Department specifically asked about them. Respondent intentionally misrepresented information to the Department to obtain benefits because he withheld information about his felony drug convictions when he knew or should have known that the Department would consider the information in determining his eligibility for benefits. Respondent did not have any apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit his understanding or ability to fulfill his reporting requirement.

Disqualification

In general, individuals found to have committed an intentional Program violation through an administrative disqualification hearing shall be ineligible to participate in the Program: (i) for a period of 12 months for the first violation, (ii) for a period of 24 months for the second violation, and (iii) permanently for a third violation. 7 CFR 273.16(b).

Only the individual who committed the violation shall be disqualified – not the entire household. 7 CFR 273.16(b)(11).

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 12-month disqualification.

DECISION AND ORDER

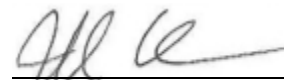
The Administrative Law Judge based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, concludes that:

1. Respondent received an overissuance of FAP benefits in the amount of \$5,167.00 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 the Food Assistance Program (FAP).

IT IS ORDERED that the Department may initiate recoupment procedures for the amount of \$5,167.00 in accordance with Department policy.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Respondent shall be disqualified from the Food Assistance Program (FAP) for a period of 12 months.

JK/nr



Jeffrey Kemm
Administrative Law Judge
for Robert Gordon, 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 Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules (MOAHR).

A party may request a rehearing or reconsideration of this Order if the request is received by MOAHR 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. MOAHR will not review any response to a request for rehearing/reconsideration.

A written request may be mailed or faxed to MOAHR. If submitted by fax, the written request must be faxed to (517) 763-0155; Attention: MOAHR Rehearing/Reconsideration Request.

If submitted by mail, the written request must be addressed as follows:

Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P.O. Box 30639
Lansing, Michigan 48909-8139

DHHS

Amber Gibson
5303 South Cedar
P.O. Box 30088
Lansing, MI
48911

Ingham County DHHS- via electronic mail

MDHHS- Recoupment- via electronic mail

L. Bengel- via electronic mail

Petitioner

OIG
P.O. Box 30062
Lansing, MI
48909-7562

Respondent

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] NV