



1. The Department's OIG filed a hearing request on May 9, 2019, to establish a claim 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 FAP benefits.
3. Respondent was a recipient of FAP benefits issued by the Department.
4. Respondent was aware of the responsibility not to engage in the trafficking of FAP 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 August 5, 2018 through August 13, 2018 (fraud period).
7. The Department alleges that Respondent engaged in the trafficking of FAP benefits in the amount of \$ [REDACTED]
8. This was Respondent's first alleged IPV.
9. 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. 12-13.

### **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.

7 CFR 273.16(c); BAM 700 (October 2018), p. 8; BAM 720, p. 1.

An IPV is also suspected for a client who is alleged to have trafficked FAP benefits. 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.

Additionally, trafficking is (i) the buying or selling of FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food; (ii) selling products purchased with FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food; (iii) purchasing containers with deposits, dumping/discarding product and then returning containers to obtain cash refund deposits; and (iv) attempting to buy, sell or steal FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food. BAM 700 (October 2016), p. 2. Trafficking also includes (i) fraudulently using, transferring, altering, acquiring, or possessing coupons, authorization cards, or access devices, or (ii) redeeming or presenting for payment coupons known to be fraudulently obtained or transferred. BEM 203 (October 2015), p. 3.

In the present case, the Department alleges that Respondent committed an IPV of FAP benefits based on a social media post (Facebook) made by Respondent. The Department testified that Respondent submitted an application on March 21, 2018, in which she acknowledged that she understood the rules associated with all programs including the receipt of FAP benefits.

The Department presented evidence to show that in a post dated August 5, 2018, Respondent asked “Who need some stamps? Asking for a friend”. When replying to comments left by other Facebook users, Respondent stated that she had “130 for sale.” The Department also presented a second post dated August 13, 2018, in which Respondent asked if “Anybody wanna buy 200 stamps asking for my sister??” The post also showed replies asking if Respondent still had them as well as a warning from others telling her to watch what she says on Facebook because the police are watching.

The Department testified that Respondent posted the information using a screen name of [REDACTED]. The Department indicated that Respondent was identified using personal information she posted in her Facebook page. Further, Respondent disclosed her location, the name of her child, and posted a picture of an ultrasound with her name printed across the top of the photo. The Department also used pictures she had posted of herself to verify Respondent’s identity.

The federal regulations define trafficking to include “attempting to buy, sell, steal, or otherwise affect an exchange of [FAP] benefits issued and accessed via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) . . . for cash or consideration other than eligible food, either directly, indirectly, in complicity or collusion with others, or acting alone.” 7 CFR 271.2. Respondent failed to appear at the hearing and thus, failed to offer an alternative explanation to her Facebook post other than the attempted sale of FAP benefits in violation of the Department policy and the federal regulations. Therefore, it is found that the Department has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV of FAP benefits.

**Disqualification**

A court or hearing decision that finds a client committed an IPV disqualifies that client from receiving program benefits. BAM 720, p. 15. 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. Clients who commit an IPV are disqualified for a standard disqualification period except when a court orders a different period, or except when the OI relates to MA or FAP. BAM 720, p. 16. Clients are disqualified for periods of one year for the first IPV, two years for the second IPV, lifetime disqualification for the third IPV, and 10 years for a FAP concurrent receipt of benefits. BAM 720, p. 16; 7 CFR 273.16(b)(1); 7 CFR 273.16(b)(11).

In this case, the Department has satisfied its burden of showing that Respondent committed an IPV concerning FAP benefits. Accordingly, Respondent is subject to a 12-month disqualification under the FAP program.

**Claim**

Pursuant to 7 CFR 18(c)(2), claims arising from trafficking-related offenses will be the value of the trafficked benefits as determined by:

- (i) The individual's admission
- (ii) Adjudication; or
- (iii) The documentation that forms the basis for the trafficking determination.

The Department indicated that it was only seeking to recoup benefits referenced in the social media posts, which totaled \$ [REDACTED]. As previously stated, the Department has established that Respondent trafficked FAP benefits on August 5, 2018, and August 13, 2018; and as such, it is entitled to a claim in the amount of \$ [REDACTED].

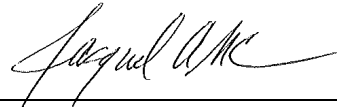
**DECISION AND ORDER**

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 did commit an IPV.
2. Respondent **did** receive an OI of FAP benefits in the amount of [REDACTED].

The Department is ORDERED to initiate recoupment procedures for the amount of \$ [REDACTED] in accordance with Department policy.

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



JAM/jaf

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**Jacquelyn A. McClinton**  
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 (via electronic mail)**

Jackie Stempel  
MDHHS-Muskegon-Hearings

**Petitioner (via electronic mail)**

MDHHS-OIG-Hearings

L Bengel  
Policy Recoupment

**Respondent (via first class mail)**

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