

2. On the North Carolina application, Respondent indicated that she lived at an address in North Carolina. Exhibit A, p. 35.
3. North Carolina approved Respondent's application for FAP benefits and issued Respondent FAP benefits from September 2016 through at least January 2017. Exhibit A, pp. 38-41.
4. On [REDACTED], 2016, Respondent filed with the Department an application for FAP benefits. Exhibit A, pp. 11-34.
5. By signing the application, Respondent certified that she received, reviewed, and understood the information contained within the DHHS publication titled "Things You Must Do." Exhibit A, pp. 16-17.
6. "Things You Must Do" advised Respondent that she was required to report any changes in address or moving out of the state of Michigan within 10 days and that an intentional failure to do so violated the law and if proven, would result in criminal and/or civil penalties, including disqualification from the program. Exhibit A, pp. 16-17.
7. Respondent did not have any apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit her understanding or ability to fulfill her responsibilities to the Department.
8. On Respondent's application for Michigan FAP benefits, Respondent indicated that she lived at an address in [REDACTED] Michigan. Exhibit A, p. 13.
9. On Respondent's application for Michigan FAP benefits, Respondent was asked whether she was receiving FAP benefits from any other source during the month of the application, which was [REDACTED] 2016. Respondent answered "No" despite receiving FAP benefits from North Carolina for that month based on the FAP application Respondent submitted to the state of North Carolina just about one month prior. Exhibit A, pp. 13, 38-41.
10. Respondent's application for Michigan FAP benefits was approved, and the Department issued Respondent FAP benefits each month from September 2016 through January 2017. Exhibit A, pp. 46-47.
11. Each month from September 2016 through January 2017, Respondent was issued FAP benefits from both the Department and from the state of North Carolina. Exhibit A, pp. 35-47.
12. The Department's OIG filed a hearing request on August 17, 2018, to establish an OI of benefits received by Respondent as a result of Respondent having allegedly committed an IPV by concurrently collecting FAP benefits from Michigan and North Carolina.

13. This was Respondent's first alleged IPV.
14. The OIG requested that Respondent be disqualified from receiving FAP benefits for a period of one year.
15. The Department's OIG indicates that the time period it is considering the fraud period is September 7, 2016, through January 31, 2017 (fraud period), during which Respondent was issued \$1,713 in FAP benefits.
16. A Notice of Hearing was mailed to Respondent at the last known address and was not returned by the United States Postal Services 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), 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.

The Department's position in this matter is that Respondent's misrepresentation regarding the collection of other FAP benefits on her Michigan application caused the Department to erroneously issue her FAP benefits while Respondent was concurrently collecting benefits in North Carolina. The Department argues that Respondent's actions constituted an IPV for which the penalty is a one-year disqualification from receiving FAP benefits.

Overissuance

Only residents of Michigan are eligible to receive benefits from the Department. BEM 220 (January 2016), p. 1. Furthermore, a person cannot receive FAP benefits in more than one state for any month. BEM 222 (October 2016), p. 3. When an ineligible client is issued benefits or an eligible client is issued more benefits than the client is entitled, the Department must attempt to recoup the OI. BAM 700 (October 2016), p. 1.

In this case, the Department showed by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent was receiving benefits from the state of North Carolina in each month that the Department issued her benefits from September 2016 through January 2017. Thus, for each month the Department issued Respondent Michigan FAP benefits from September 2016 through January 2017, Respondent was already receiving FAP benefits from at least one other state, rendering Respondent ineligible for the Michigan FAP benefits.

However, because Respondent concealed the fact that she was receiving benefits from another state from the Department, the Department issued Respondent FAP benefits totaling \$1,713 from September 2016 through January 2017. As Respondent was ineligible to receive those benefits, they are considered an OI.

Intentional Program Violation

The Department's policy in effect at the time of Respondent's alleged IPV defined an IPV as an overissuance in which the following three conditions exist: (1) the client intentionally failed to report information or intentionally gave incomplete or inaccurate information needed to make a correct benefit determination; (2) the client was clearly and correctly instructed regarding his or her reporting responsibilities; and (3) the client has no apparent physical or mental impairment that limits his or her understanding or ability to fulfill his or her reporting responsibilities. BAM 720 (January 2016) 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; see also 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, the Department has met its burden. The evidence shows that Respondent intentionally defrauded the people of Michigan by lying on her FAP application. On Respondent's [REDACTED] 2016, Michigan FAP application, Respondent certified that her statements were true and acknowledged the penalties for making false statements. Yet on that application, Respondent made a clear and obvious misrepresentation regarding her receipt of benefits from other states. Respondent claimed that she did not receive any food benefits from any other state. However, the day before submitting that application, Respondent used her North Carolina FAP benefits to purchase over \$300 worth of groceries. And then, just a few hours after submitting that application wherein she made a sworn statement under penalty of perjury that she was not receiving any other FAP benefits, Respondent used her North Carolina FAP benefits to make a purchase.

Clearly, Respondent was simply attempting in a blatantly fraudulent manner to double dip in FAP benefits. Respondent did not appear at the hearing to provide any explanations for her dishonest and fraudulent statements. Respondent did not have any apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit her understanding or ability to fulfill her obligation to be truthful to the Department.

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, pp. 15-16. In general, clients

are disqualified for standards 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. Clients are disqualified for a period of ten years for concurrent receipt of benefits if fraudulent statements were made regarding identity or residency. BAM 720, p. 16.

In this case, Respondent committed an IPV that resulted in concurrently receiving benefits from Michigan and another state. Respondent concurrently received benefits from Michigan and North Carolina from September 2016 through January 2017. Respondent, however, did not directly make any false statements regarding her residency or identity when filling out the paperwork required to obtain those benefits. She merely lied about receiving benefits in another state at the time of application. Thus, Respondent is not subject to a ten-year disqualification from receiving FAP benefits. However, she is subject to a one-year disqualification from receiving FAP benefits.

DECISION AND ORDER

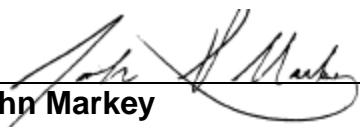
The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, concludes that:

1. Respondent received an overissuance of FAP benefits in the amount of \$1,713 that the Department is entitled to recoup and/or collect.
2. The Department has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV with respect to her FAP benefits.
3. Respondent is subject to a one-year disqualification from receiving FAP benefits.

IT IS ORDERED that the Department may initiate recoupment and/or collection procedures for the total overissuance amount of \$1,713 established in this matter less any amounts already recouped or collected.

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

JM/hb



John Markey
Administrative Law Judge
for Nick Lyon, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

