



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]

Date Mailed: February 5, 2020
MOAHR Docket No.: 19-012959
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Ellen McLemore

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 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 held on January 23, 2020, from Detroit, Michigan. The Department was represented by Brent Brown, Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG).

Respondent did not appear at the hearing; and it was held in Respondent's absence pursuant to 7 CFR 273.16(e), Mich Admin Code R 400.3130(5), or Mich Admin Code R 400.3178(5).

ISSUES

1. Did the Department establish, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV)?
2. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits for 12 months?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

1. The Department's OIG filed a hearing request on [REDACTED], 2019, to establish respondent committed an IPV.

2. The OIG has requested that Respondent be disqualified from receiving program benefits.
3. Respondent was a recipient of FAP benefits issued by the Department.
4. Respondent was aware of the responsibility to report changes in her circumstances to the Department, such as changes in employment and income.
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 periods are May 1, 2016 through May 31, 2016; August 1, 2016 through October 31, 2016 and June 1, 2017 through August 30, 2017 (fraud period).
7. The Department has already established a FAP overissuance in connection with this matter.
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 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 or more, or
 - the total amount is less than \$500, 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 overissuance 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.

BAM 700 (January 2018), pp. 7-8; 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 273.16(e)(6). The federal regulations define an IPV as: (1) made a false or misleading statement, or misrepresented, concealed or withheld facts; or (2) committed any act that constitutes a violation of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), SNAP regulations,

or any state statute for the purpose of using, presenting, transferring, acquiring, receiving, possessing for trafficking of SNAP benefits or Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. 7 CFR 273.16(c). 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.

In this case, the Department alleges that Respondent committed an IPV of her FAP benefits because she failed to report her Living Together Partner's (LTP) income. While this evidence may be sufficient to establish that Respondent may have been overissued benefits, to establish an IPV, the Department must present clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld or misrepresented information for the purpose of maintaining benefits.

In support of its contention that Respondent committed an IPV, the Department presented a redetermination that Respondent submitted to the Department on March 15, 2016. The Department asserts that when completing the redetermination process, Respondent acknowledged that she had received the Information Booklet advising her regarding "Things You Must Do" which explained reporting changes in circumstances, including income/employment. Additionally, Respondent listed her LTP as a household member.

The Department presented a Notice of Case Action sent to the Respondent on March 28, 2016. Respondent was advised that her FAP benefits were based on \$0 in earned and unearned income and that she needed to report any changes in employment/income to the Department within 10 days. The Department also presented Respondent's LTP's UC benefit report showing he began receiving UC benefits on April 2, 2016 and continued to receive benefits until May 28, 2016.

The Department presented a second Notice of Case Action sent to the Respondent on June 16, 2016. Respondent was advised that she was a simplified reporter and that she needed to report to the Department if her household income exceeded \$3,078. The Department provided an employment verification from Respondent's LTP's income from employment at [REDACTED]. The document shows that Respondent's LTP began receiving income on April 30, 2016, and the additional income placed the group's household income over the simplified reporting limit. The Department stated that Respondent did not advise the Department of the change in income until she submitted a New Hire Client Notice on June 14, 2016. The New Hire Client Notice does show that Respondent reported her LTP's earnings but provided false information as to his rate of pay and start date.

The Department also highlighted that, after a lapse in employment, Respondent's LTP returned to work on April 15, 2017. Respondent's LTP continued to work and receive earnings until December 7, 2017. The Department stated that Respondent was a change reporter at the time and was expected to report any changes in income/employment. Respondent did not report that her LTP had returned to work.

The Department presented Respondent's Benefit Issuance Summary which showed she was issued FAP benefits throughout the fraud period. Respondent consistently failed to report her LTP's income to the Department, as required. This indicates Respondent was intentionally withholding information regarding her LTP's employment to receive benefits for which she was not entitled. Therefore, the Department established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent intentionally withheld facts for the purpose of maintaining FAP benefits, and thus, it has established that she committed an IPV in connection with her FAP case.

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; BEM 708 (October 2016), p. 1. Clients are disqualified for ten years for a FAP IPV involving concurrent receipt of benefits, and, for all other IPV cases involving FIP, FAP or SDA, 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; 7 CFR 273.16(b). CDC clients who intentionally violate CDC program rules are disqualified for six months for the first occurrence, twelve months for the second occurrence, and lifetime for the third occurrence. BEM 708, p. 1. 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, the Department requested that Respondent be subject to a 12-month disqualification period. As discussed above, the Department has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV concerning FAP. Therefore, Respondent is subject to a one-year disqualification from her receipt of 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 the Department has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV.

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

EM/cg



Ellen McLemore

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

Via Email:

MDHHS-Wayne-49-Hearings
OIG Hearings
Recoupment
MOAHR

Respondent – Via First-Class Mail:

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