



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: December 19, 2018
MAHS Docket No.: 18-009427
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 December 13, 2018, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by Brian Siegfried, 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).

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 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 November 18, 2014, Respondent applied for assistance from the Department, including FAP benefits. In Respondent's application, Respondent asserted that he did not have any income from employment. The Department instructed Respondent to report any changes in his employment or income to the Department within 10 days of the date of the change.
2. Respondent did not have any apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit his understanding or ability to fulfill his responsibilities to the Department.

3. On April 2, 2015, Respondent's employment at [REDACTED] came to an end due to a layoff.
4. On April 6, 2015, Respondent filed a claim for unemployment benefits.
5. On April 17, 2015, the Department issued a Notice of Case Action to Respondent which notified Respondent that his FAP benefit was based on a reported income of \$[REDACTED]. The Department instructed Respondent to report any changes in his employment or income to the Department within 10 days of the date of the change.
6. On April 25, 2015, the Unemployment Insurance Agency issued Respondent his first unemployment benefit payment. The amount of the payment was \$[REDACTED].
7. Respondent did not report to the Department that his income increased from unemployment benefits.
8. The Department continued to issue FAP benefits to Respondent based on \$0.00 income while Respondent was receiving unemployment benefits.
9. On August 1, 2015, Respondent returned to employment at Michigan Sugar.
10. On August 13, 2015, [REDACTED] issued Respondent his first payroll remittance. The amount of the remittance was \$[REDACTED].
11. Respondent did not report to the Department that his income increased from employment.
12. The Department continued to issue FAP benefits to Respondent based on \$[REDACTED] income while Respondent was working at Michigan Sugar and earning an income.
13. The Department investigated Respondent's case and determined that it overissued Respondent FAP benefits because Respondent had unreported income.
14. On August 25, 2018, Respondent signed an agreement to repay the Department \$[REDACTED] for FAP benefits that were overissued.
15. On August 27, 2018, Respondent spoke with the Department and asserted that he reported his income and the Department failed to properly budget it when determining his FAP benefits.
16. On August 30, 2018, the Department's OIG filed a hearing request to establish that Respondent committed an IPV.
17. The OIG requested Respondent be disqualified from FAP for 12 months for a first IPV.

18. 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).

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 was required to report changes in his circumstances to the Department within 10 days of the change. 7 CFR 273.12(a)(2). The Department clearly and correctly instructed Respondent to report changes to the Department within 10 days, including changes in his employment and income. Respondent failed to report that he began receiving income from unemployment benefits within 10 days of the date he received his first payment from unemployment. Respondent also failed to report that he began receiving income from employment within 10 days of the date he received his first paycheck from his employer. Respondent did not provide any explanation for his inaction. Respondent’s failure to report these changes to the Department must be considered an intentional misrepresentation to maintain or obtain benefits from the Department since Respondent knew or should have known that he was required to report the changes to the Department and that reporting them would have caused his benefits to be reduced. 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 FAP: (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 from FAP.


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 committed an IPV.
2. Respondent should be disqualified from FAP.

IT IS ORDERED that Respondent shall be disqualified from FAP for a period of 12 months.

JK/nr



Jeffrey Kemm
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

DHHS

Kim Cates
1399 W. Center Road
Essexville, MI
48732

Bay County DHHS- via electronic mail

MDHHS- Recoupment- via electronic mail

M. Shumaker- via electronic mail

Petitioner

OIG
PO Box 30062
Lansing, MI
48909-7562

Respondent

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