



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

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

ORLENE HAWKS
DIRECTOR

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Date Mailed: February 28, 2020
MOAHR Docket No.: 19-013460
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Amanda M. T. Marler

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 February 27, 2020 from Detroit, Michigan. The Department was represented by Daniel Beck, 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 a claim for trafficked Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits?
2. Did the Department establish, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV)?
3. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving benefits for 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. The Department's OIG filed a hearing request on November 22, 2019, seeking to disqualify Respondent from FAP as a result of an IPV by trafficking.

2. Respondent was a recipient of FAP benefits issued by the Department.
3. Respondent **was** informed of the responsibility not to buy, sell, trade, exchange, or otherwise traffic FAP benefits.
4. Respondent **did not have** an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement.
5. The Department's OIG indicates that the incident leading to the allegation of fraud took place on April 13, 2017.
6. The Department is seeking to establish a claim for \$700.00 in trafficked FAP benefits.
7. This was Respondent's **first** alleged IPV.
8. 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 OIs 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. 5, 12-13; ASM 165 (August 2016).

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.

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, misrepresented information, or withheld facts or committed any act constituting a violation of Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations or State statutes for the **purpose** of establishing, maintaining, using, presenting, transferring, receiving, possessing, trafficking, increasing or preventing reduction of program benefits or eligibility. BAM 720, pp. 1, 12-13 (emphasis in original); 7 CFR 273.16(c) and (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.

In this case, the Department alleges that Respondent committed an IPV by trafficking \$700.00 in FAP benefits. Trafficking is the buying or selling of FAP benefits for cash or consideration other than eligible food. BAM 700, p. 1. 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 2017), p. 3. 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. In this case, the Department established that Respondent was adequately informed of program rights and responsibilities via his Application dated [REDACTED], 2014.

On April 5, 2017, Respondent received a large lump-sum payment in the amount of \$3,120.00 as a result of a settlement in the *Barry v Lyon* case. In addition to the lump-sum payment, Respondent was a regular recipient of FAP benefits in the amount of \$194.00 per month based upon a group size of one. On April 13, 2017, Respondent visited a Gordon Food Service and completed one transaction totaling \$700.00. His only purchase was 20 cases of Red Bull. The Department was alerted to the transaction by an anonymous tip from an employee of Gordon Food Service. Respondent did not appear at the hearing to explain the purchase or determine his credibility. In the experience of the Department, purchases of this nature are made in order to resell the Red Bull to party stores and gas stations at 50 cents on the dollar.

Given that Respondent has a group size of one, his purchase of Red Bull included 480 individuals cans, the anonymous tip from the store employee, and the experience of the Department, the Department has met its burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence to establish an IPV by trafficking.

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. Clients are disqualified for 10 years for a FAP IPV involving concurrent receipt of benefits, and, for all other IPV cases involving FAP, 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)(1) and (5). 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 has satisfied its burden of showing that Respondent committed an IPV. This was Respondent's first IPV. Therefore, he is subject to a one-year disqualification under the FAP.

Recoupment or Collections

When a client group receives more benefits than they are entitled to receive, the Department must attempt to recoup that amount. BAM 700, p. 1; 7 CFR 273.18(c)(2). The OI amount for a trafficking-related IPV is the value of the trafficked amount as determined by an administrative hearing decision, repayment and disqualification agreement, or court decision. BAM 720, p. 8; 7 CFR 273.18(c)(2).

As discussed above, the Department presented clear and convincing evidence to support its allegation that Respondent trafficked FAP benefits at Store. In reviewing his IG-312 EBT History and receipts from each GFS, Respondent completed \$700.00 worth of transactions for Red Bull, which were found to be trafficked FAP benefits as discussed above. Therefore, the Department has met its burden of proof in establishing a claim for trafficked FAP benefits in the amount of \$700.00.

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. The Department **has** established a claim for trafficked FAP benefits in the amount of \$700.00.

The Department is ORDERED to initiate recoupment/collection procedures for the amount of \$700.00 in accordance with Department policy.

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

AMTM/jaf



Amanda M. T. Marler

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

Chelsea McCune
MDHHS-Macomb-20-Hearings
L Bengel
Policy Recoupment

Petitioner

MDHHS-OIG-Hearings

Respondent

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