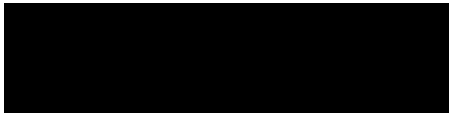




GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

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

ORLENE HAWKS
DIRECTOR



Date Mailed: December 14, 2020
MOAHR Docket No.: 20-005050
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Ellen McLemore

HEARING DECISION FOR INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (Department) requested a hearing alleging that Respondent, [REDACTED], committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV). Pursuant to the Department's request and in accordance with MCL 400.9, 7 CFR 273.16, 42 CFR 431.230(b), and 45 CFR 235.110, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3130 and R 400.3178, this matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge. After due notice, a hearing was held via telephone conference on December 10, 2020. Taylor Jenkins, Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG), represented the Department. 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. From May 1, 2016 through January 31, 2017, Respondent received \$1,746 in FAP benefits from the Department. From February 1, 2018 through June 30, 2018, Respondent received \$960 in FAP benefits from the Department.
2. Respondent was aware of the responsibility to report changes in his circumstances to the Department, such as changes in employment and income.

3. Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement.
4. On July 1, 2020, the Department's OIG filed a hearing request alleging that Respondent intentionally withheld his income information, and as a result, received FAP benefits from May 1, 2016 through January 31, 2017 and from February 1, 2018 through June 30, 2018 (fraud period) that Respondent was ineligible to receive. The OIG requested that Respondent be disqualified from receiving FAP benefits for a period of 12 months due to committing an IPV. The Department has already established a FAP overissuance in connection with this matter during both time periods.
5. This was Respondent's first alleged IPV.
6. 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

The Department's policies are contained in the Department's 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 funded under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) established by the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, 7 USC 2011 to 7 USC 2036a. It is implemented by the federal regulations contained in 7 CFR 273. The Department administers FAP pursuant to MCL 400.10 of the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1 *et seq.*, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3001 to R 400.3031.

Intentional Program Violation

An IPV occurs when a recipient of Department benefits intentionally made a false or misleading statement, or misrepresented, concealed, or withheld facts. 7 CFR 273.16(c)(1). Effective October 1, 2014, the Department's OIG requests IPV hearings for cases where (1) the total repayment amount sought from Respondent for all programs combined is \$500 or more or (2) the total repayment amount sought from Respondent for all programs combined is less than \$500 but the group has a previous IPV, the matter involves concurrent receipt of assistance, the IPV involves FAP trafficking, or the alleged fraud is committed by a state government employee. BAM 720 (October 2017), pp. 12-13.

To establish an IPV, the Department must present clear and convincing evidence that the household member committed, and intended to commit, the IPV. 7 CFR 273.16(e)(6); BAM 720, p. 1. Clear and convincing evidence is evidence sufficient to result in "a firm belief or conviction as to the truth of the precise facts in issue." *Smith v*

Anonymous Joint Enterprise, 487 Mich 102, 114-115; 793 NW2d 533 (2010); see also M Civ JI 8.01. Evidence may be uncontroverted and yet not be clear and convincing; conversely, evidence may be clear and convincing despite the fact that it has been contradicted. *Smith* at 115. The clear and convincing standard is “the most demanding standard applied in civil cases.” *In re Martin*, 450 Mich 204, 227; 538 NW2d 399 (1995). For an IPV based on inaccurate reporting, Department policy also requires that the individual have been clearly and correctly instructed regarding the reporting responsibilities and have no apparent physical or mental impairment that limits the ability to understanding or fulfill these reporting responsibilities. 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).

In this case, the Department alleges that Respondent committed an IPV of his FAP benefits because he failed to notify the Department when he secured employment. 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 an application Respondent submitted to the Department on [REDACTED], 2014. The Department asserts that when completing the application process, Respondent acknowledged that he had received the Information Booklet advising him of the “Things You Must Do,” which explained reporting changes in circumstances, including employment. Additionally, the Department presented a Notice of Case Action sent to the Respondent on March 1, 2016. Respondent was advised that his FAP benefits were based on \$0 in earned income and that he needed to report any changes in employment/income to the Department within 10 days.

The Department presented a Work Number report showing Respondent was hired by [REDACTED] on March 21, 2016 and received his first paycheck on March 27, 2016. Respondent was consistently employed and receiving income until December 29, 2017. The Department testified that Respondent did not report the income from [REDACTED] until February 2, 2017.

The Department also provided a redetermination submitted by Respondent to the Department on [REDACTED], 2018. Respondent reported that he was not employed and

had no earned income. Respondent certified that the information he provided was true and accurate.

The Department presented a Work Number report from Respondent's employment at [REDACTED]. Respondent received his first paycheck on December 29, 2017 and was consistently receiving income until June 22, 2018.

The Department presented Respondent's Benefit Issuance Summary which showed he was issued FAP benefits throughout the fraud period. Respondent was hired by [REDACTED] in March 2016 and continued to receive FAP benefits until January 2017. Respondent was aware that his FAP benefits were based on an earned income amount of \$0. Respondent allowed a significant time period to lapse while he was employed at [REDACTED] without reporting the information to the Department. This indicates Respondent was intentionally withholding information regarding his employment to receive benefits for which he was not entitled. Additionally, Respondent was employed with [REDACTED] at the time he completed the [REDACTED], 2018 redetermination and provided false information regarding his income/employment. 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 he committed an IPV in connection with his 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.

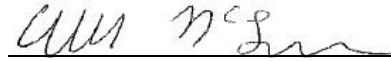
In this case, the Department requested that Respondent be subject to a 12-month disqualification period. As discussed above, the Department has established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV concerning FAP. Therefore, Respondent is subject to a one-year disqualification from his 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/jem



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-31-Grandmont-Hearings
MDHHS-OIG-Hearings
Policy-Recoupment
L. Bengel
MOAHR

Respondent – Via First-Class Mail:

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