



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: May 19, 2021
MOAHR Docket No.: 21-001848
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Christian Gardocki

HEARING DECISION

Following Petitioner's request for a hearing, this matter is before the undersigned administrative law judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and 400.37; 7 CFR 273.15 to 273.18; 42 CFR 431.200 to 431.250; 42 CFR 438.400 to 438.424; 45 CFR 99.1 to 99.33; and 45 CFR 205.10; and Mich Admin Code, R 792.11002. After due notice, a hearing was held via telephone conference on May 13, 2021. Petitioner participated and was unrepresented. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) was represented by Lisa Smith, specialist

ISSUE

The issue is whether MDHHS properly terminated Petitioner's Food Assistance Program (FAP) eligibility.

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 February 23, 2021, Petitioner submitted to MDHHS redetermination documentation concerning ongoing FAP eligibility. Petitioner reported a FAP group including two sons and ongoing employment income. Exhibit A, pp. 7-12.
2. As of February 2021, Petitioner's son, [REDACTED] (hereinafter, "Son") received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) of \$652.52. No other persons in the household were disabled, senior, or disabled veterans.
3. In February 2021, Petitioner received biweekly gross employment income of \$1,461.53 and an atypical pay of \$3,461.54.

4. As of February 2021, Petitioner had no dependent care or child support expenses. Additionally, Son had no medical expenses.
5. As of February 2021, Petitioner was responsible for \$800 in monthly housing expenses and heating and/or cooling expenses.
6. On March 24, 2021, MDHHS terminated Petitioner's FAP eligibility beginning April 2021 due to excess net income.
7. On ████████ 2021, Petitioner requested a hearing to dispute the closure of FAP benefits.
8. On April 6, 2021, MDHHS recalculated Petitioner's eligibility without Son's SSI and determined that Petitioner was still ineligible to receive FAP benefits.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Food Assistance Program [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. MDHHS administers FAP pursuant to MCL 400.10, the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b, and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3001-.3011. MDHHS policies are contained in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), and Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

Petitioner requested a hearing to dispute a termination of FAP benefits. Exhibit A, pp. 4-5. A Notice of Case Action dated March 24, 2021, stated that Petitioner was ineligible for FAP benefits beginning November 2020 due to excess net income. Exhibit A, pp. 27-32. The benefit calculation corresponding to the notice factored that Son received SSI. As of April 2021, Son apparently stopped receiving SSI. As a result, MDHHS updated its benefit calculation on April 6, 2021, and again determined that Petitioner was ineligible for FAP benefits due to excess net income. Because the updated determination was more favorable to Petitioner (by excluding previously factored income), it will be the subject of the analysis.

BEM 556 outlines the factors and calculations required to determine a client's net income. FAP net income factors group size, countable monthly income, and relevant monthly expenses. During the hearing, MDHHS provided budget documents for April 2021 listing most relevant budget factors.¹ Exhibit A, pp. 34-35. During the hearing, all relevant budget factors were discussed with Petitioner.

¹ The presented budget did not include shelter costs factored by MDHHS. Shelter costs were listed on the earlier budget for April 2021. Exhibit A, p. 23. As shelter costs were unchanged from the first calculation of Petitioner's FAP eligibility for April 2021, the previous budget page is acceptable.

In determining Petitioner's FAP eligibility, MDHHS factored a group size of three.² Petitioner did not dispute the benefit group size.

MDHHS projected Petitioner's income from recent employment income. For non-child support income, MDHHS uses past income to project a FAP group's income. BEM 505 (October 2017) p. 5. Documentation from theworknumber.com verified biweekly gross employment income to Respondent in February 2021 of \$1,461.53 and \$3,461.54. Exhibit A, pp. 14-18. MDHHS excluded the \$3,461.54 pay as unrepresentative of future earnings (see BEM 505) and factored only Respondent's pay of \$1,461.53. For FAP benefits, MDHHS generally counts gross wages.³ BEM 501 (July 2017), p. 7. Stable or fluctuating biweekly employment income is converted to a monthly amount by multiplying the average income by 2.15. *Id.*, p. 8. Multiplying Petitioner's biweekly gross employment income by 2.15 results in a monthly income of \$3,142 (dropping cents). MDHHS determined the same employment income for Petitioner. MDHHS allows a 20% budget credit for timely reported employment income. Applying the credit results in countable employment income of \$2,513 (dropping cents).

MDHHS uses certain expenses to determine net income for FAP eligibility and benefit levels. BEM 554 (October 2015), p. 1. For groups without a senior (over 60 years old), disabled or disabled veteran (SDV) member, MDHHS considers the following expenses: childcare, excess shelter (housing and utilities) up to a capped amount and court-ordered child support and arrearages paid to non-household members (see *Id.*). For groups containing SDV members, MDHHS also considers the medical expenses above \$35 for each SDV group member(s) and an uncapped excess shelter expense. Countable expenses are subtracted from a client's monthly countable income.

Petitioner's testimony acknowledged that she did not report child support or dependent care expenses for her household. Petitioner's testimony also acknowledged that Son, the only SDV member of her household had no medical costs.⁴

Petitioner's FAP benefit group size justifies a standard deduction of \$167 (see RFT 255). The standard deduction is given to all FAP benefit groups, though the amount varies based on the benefit group size. The standard deduction and countable expenses are subtracted from the countable monthly income to calculate the group's adjusted gross income. Subtracting the standard deduction and countable expenses from Petitioner's running net income results in an adjusted gross income of \$2,346.

MDHHS credited Petitioner with monthly housing expenses of \$800; Petitioner did not allege having additional housing expenses. Petitioner was credited with a standard heating/utility (h/u) credit of \$537. RFT 255 (January 2021) p. 1. Generally, the h/u

² See BEM 212 for policies on determining group size for FAP benefits.

³ Exceptions to using gross wages include the following: earned income tax credits, flexible benefits, striker earnings, student disregards, and census worker earnings. BEM 501 (July 2017), p. 7. None of these exceptions apply to the present case.

⁴ Petitioner's renewal document did claim medical expenses for herself. Exhibit A, p. 10. The expenses cannot be factored because Petitioner was neither senior, disabled, nor a disabled veteran.

credit covers all utility expenses and is the maximum credit available.⁵ Adding Petitioner's housing and utility credits results in a total shelter obligation of \$1,337.

MDHHS only credits FAP benefit groups with an "excess shelter" expense. The excess shelter expense is calculated by subtracting half of Petitioner's adjusted gross income from Petitioner's total shelter obligation. Petitioner's excess shelter amount is \$174.


The FAP benefit group's net income is determined by subtracting the excess shelter expense from the group's adjusted gross income; doing so results in \$2,172 in net income for Petitioner's group. A chart listed in RFT 260 is used to determine the proper FAP benefit issuance. Based on Petitioner's group size and net income, Petitioner's proper FAP benefit issuance for April 2021 is \$0; the same issuance amount was calculated by MDHHS. Thus, MDHHS properly terminated Petitioner's FAP eligibility.

⁵ MDHHS allows additional credits for "actual utility expenses". Such expenses are only allowed for utility installation charges, water well installation and maintenance, and septic installation and maintenance. BEM 554 (October 2019) p. 15. There was no evidence of applicable exceptions.

DECISION AND ORDER

The administrative law judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds that MDHHS properly terminated Petitioner's FAP eligibility beginning April 2021 due to excess net income. The actions taken by MDHHS are **AFFIRMED**.

CG/tm



Christian Gardocki
Administrative Law Judge

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-15-Hearings
M. Holden
D. Sweeney
BSC4
MOAHR

Petitioner – Via First-Class Mail:

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