



GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

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

MARLON I. BROWN, DPA
ACTING DIRECTOR

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Date Mailed: November 1, 2023
MOAHR Docket No.: 23-002368
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Colleen Lack

HEARING DECISION FOR INTENTIONAL PROGRAM VIOLATION

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS or the Department) requested a hearing alleging that Respondent [REDACTED] [REDACTED] committed an intentional program violation (IPV). Pursuant to MDHHS' 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 October 3, 2023.

Justin Motley, Regulation Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG), represented MDHHS.

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Respondent, appeared on her own behalf.

ISSUES

1. Did MDHHS establish, by clear and convincing evidence, that Respondent committed an IPV concerning Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits?
2. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving benefits for FAP?
3. Did Respondent receive an overissuance (OI) of FAP benefits that MDHHS is entitled to recoup and/or collect as a recipient claim?

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 November 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022, Respondent received \$ [REDACTED] in FAP benefits. (Exhibit A, pp. 37-39 and 46-48)

2. On August █ 2021, Respondent submitted a Renew Benefits for FAP. Respondent reported changes including changes with address, shelter expenses, and income. Respondent reported her address was in █ Michigan. Respondent did not report any changes to the household members, which included herself and two children ages 6 and 2. (Exhibit A, pp. 8-12)
3. Respondent's signature on the Renew Benefits certified that the information she provided was accurate and that she read and understood the rights and responsibilities, which would include providing accurate information and timely reporting any changes. (Exhibit A, p. 3, 7, and 12; Regulation Agent Testimony)
4. On August █ 2021, an interview was completed with Respondent, who reported her children were with her 30-31 days out of the month. The rights and responsibilities were reviewed with Respondent. (Exhibit A, pp. 21-23)
5. On August █ 2021, a Notice of Case Action was issued to Respondent approving FAP for the household of three. The Notice reminded Respondent of the responsibility to report changes, including changes with the number of persons living in the home. A blank Change Report form was included. (Exhibit A, pp. 13-20)
6. School records show that Respondent's son was living with his father in █ Michigan with a registration date of August █ 2021. (Exhibit A, pp. 24-36)
7. Respondent was aware of the responsibility to accurately report information and to timely report any changes. (Exhibit A, p. 3, 7, 12, 17-20, and 23; Regulation Agent Testimony)
8. Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the ability to understand or fulfill the reporting requirements. (Exhibit A, p. 22)
9. Respondent has no prior FAP IPV disqualifications. (Exhibit A, p. 1)
10. On April 27, 2023, MDHHS' OIG filed a hearing request alleging that Respondent intentionally failed to report her household's accurate group composition to the Department and as a result, received FAP benefits from November 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022 (fraud period) that Respondent was ineligible to receive. OIG requested that (i) Respondent repay \$█ to MDHHS for FAP benefits that Respondent was ineligible to receive and (ii) Respondent be disqualified from receiving FAP benefits for a period of 12 months due to committing an IPV. (Exhibit A, pp. 1-50)
11. 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

MDHHS policies are contained in the MDHHS 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. MDHHS 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 MDHHS benefits intentionally made a false or misleading statement, or misrepresented, concealed, or withheld facts. 7 CFR 273.16(c)(1). Effective October 1, 2014, MDHHS'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 1, 2017), p. 12-13.

To establish an IPV, MDHHS 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, MDHHS 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.

In this case, MDHHS alleges that Respondent committed an IPV based on Respondent intentionally failing to report her household's accurate group composition to the Department, resulting in receiving FAP benefits from November 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022, (fraud period) that Respondent was ineligible to receive.

The Department has established that Respondent was aware of the responsibilities to accurately report information and to timely report any changes to the Department.

Department policy requires clients to completely and truthfully answer all questions on forms and in interview. BAM 105 (August 1, 2021) p. 9. Households must also report all changes in household composition, such as the addition or loss of a household member, as well as changes in residence and the resulting change in shelter costs. 7 CFR 273.12(a)(1)(ii) and 7 CFR 273.12(a)(1)(iii) Department policy requires clients to report any change in circumstances that will affect eligibility or benefit amount within 10 days. This includes changes with household composition and residence. BAM 105, pp. 11-13. Respondent's signature on the Renew Benefits certified that the information she provided was accurate and that she read and understood the rights and responsibilities, which would include providing accurate information and timely reporting any changes. The rights and responsibilities were reviewed during the interview. The Notice of Case Action also reminded Respondent of the responsibility to report changes,. (Exhibit A, p. 3, 7, 12, 17-20, and 23; Regulation Agent Testimony). Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the ability to understand or fulfill the reporting requirements. (Exhibit A, p. 22).

On August █ 2021, Respondent submitted a Renew Benefits for FAP. Respondent reported changes including changes with address, shelter expenses, and income. Respondent reported her address was in █ Michigan. Respondent did not report any changes to the household members, which included herself and two children ages 6 and 2. (Exhibit A, pp. 8-12). On August █ 2021, an interview was completed with Respondent, who reported her children were with her 30-31 days out of the month. (Exhibit A, pp. 21-23). On August █ 2021, a Notice of Case Action was issued to Respondent approving FAP for the household of three. (Exhibit A, pp. 13-17).

However, school records show that one of Respondent's sons was living with his father in █ Michigan with a registration date of August █ 2021. (Exhibit A, pp. 24-36). There was no evidence that Respondent timely reported when her son left her household.

Respondent testified that she had custody of the two children pursuant to the custody order. The father took the children for his parenting time and did not return them. Respondent asserted that she has police reports from when the father refused to give her children back when she went to pick them up. Respondent asserted that she alerted the Department when she found out that he had enrolled her son in school. They went back to court and the custody agreement ended up being changed in late 2021 or early 2022. Respondent testified that she contacted the Department to let them know what was going on and that she was awaiting a court date regarding the custody of the children. Respondent noted that her case worker changed multiple times. (Respondent Testimony).

The Regulation Agent reviewed his notes from a prior investigation and found that he spoke with Respondent around February 2022. However, Respondent's electronic case file did not show that Respondent had previously called to report her son was not in the home. (Regulation Agent Testimony).

Respondent provided detailed testimony regarding what happened with her sons leaving the home and her attempts to keep the Department informed. Accordingly, it does not appear that Respondent intentionally failed to report the change in household composition. Rather, Respondent credibly testified that she was attempting to get her children back from their father, in accordance with the custody arrangement at that time, and that she alerted her caseworker with the Department. Therefore, MDHHS has not presented clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV.

IPV Disqualification

An individual who is found pursuant to an IPV disqualification hearing to have committed a FAP IPV is disqualified from receiving benefits for the same program for 12 months for the first IPV, 24 months for the second IPV, and lifetime for the third IPV. 7 CFR 273.16(b)(1); BAM 720, p. 16. As discussed above, MDHHS has not established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV. Therefore, Respondent is not subject to a disqualification from receipt of FAP benefits.

Overissuance

When a client group receives more benefits than entitled to receive, MDHHS must attempt to recoup the OI as a recipient claim. 7 CFR 273.18(a)(2); BAM 700, (October 1, 2018), p. 1. The amount of a FAP OI is the benefit amount the client actually received minus the amount the client was eligible to receive. 7 CFR 273.18(c)(1); BAM 720, p. 8; BAM 715 (October 1, 2017), p. 6; BAM 705 (October 1, 2018), p. 6.

In this case, MDHHS alleged that Respondent was overissued FAP benefits totaling \$[REDACTED] during the fraud period. From November 1, 2021 to April 30, 2022, Respondent received \$[REDACTED] in FAP benefits. (Exhibit A, pp. 37-39 and 46-48). When the corrected household composition was utilized to redetermine eligibility for FAP, Respondent's household was only eligible for \$[REDACTED] in FAP benefits during the fraud period. (Exhibit A, pp. 99-109). Therefore, MDHHS is entitled to repayment from Respondent of \$[REDACTED] in overissued FAP benefits for the fraud period.

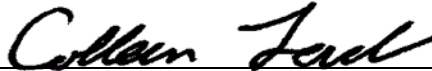
DECISION AND ORDER

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. MDHHS has not established by clear and convincing evidence that Respondent committed an IPV.
2. Respondent is not subject to a disqualification from FAP.
3. Respondent did receive an OI of FAP benefits in the amount of \$[REDACTED]

IT IS ORDERED that MDHHS initiate recoupment and/or collection procedures in accordance with MDHHS policy for a FAP OI in the amount of \$ [REDACTED] less any amounts already recouped/collected for the fraud period.

CL/dm



Colleen Lack
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-Electronic Mail :

Petitioner
OIG
**MDHHS-OIG-
HEARINGS@michigan.gov**

DHHS
Amber Gibson
Ingham County DHHS
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Policy-Recoupment

StebbinsN

MOAHR

Via-First Class Mail :

Respondent

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