



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: October 25, 2023
MOAHR Docket No.: 23-002928
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: OIG
Respondent: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Kevin Scully

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, and with Mich Admin Code, R 400.3130, and R 400.3178. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on October 4, 2023, from Lansing, Michigan. The Department was represented by Patrick Waldron, 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 Respondent receive an overissuance (OI) of Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits that the Department is entitled to recoup?
2. Did the Department establish by clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV)?
3. Should Respondent be disqualified from receiving Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits?

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 an application for assistance dated August [REDACTED] 2018, the Respondent acknowledged her duties and responsibilities including the duty to use Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits in a manner consistent with the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008. Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement. Exhibit A, 15-22.

2. [REDACTED] dies on May [REDACTED] 2022. Exhibit A, p 8.
3. Ms. [REDACTED] was a Food Assistance Program (FAP) recipient from May 1, 2022, through June 30, 2022. Exhibit A, p 13.
4. The Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits granted to Ms. [REDACTED] were used to make purchases totaling \$[REDACTED] from May 12, 2022, through May 26, 2022. Exhibit A, p 14.
5. The Department's OIG filed a hearing request on May 30, 2023, to establish that Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV). Exhibit A, p 3.
6. On May [REDACTED] 2023, the Department sent Respondent an Intentional Program Violation Repayment Agreement (DHS-4350) with notice of a \$[REDACTED] overpayment. Exhibit A, pp 72-73.
7. On May [REDACTED] 2023, the Department sent Respondent a Request for Waiver of Disqualification Hearing (DHS-826). Exhibit A, pp 74-75.
8. The Department received a Request for Waiver of Disqualification signed by Respondent where she admitted to the facts as presented in the Department's investigation report and that she understood that she would be disqualified from the Food Assistance Program (FAP). Exhibit A, pp 79-80.
9. This was Respondent's first established IPV.
10. A notice of hearing was mailed to Respondent at the last known address and was not returned by the US Postal Service as undeliverable.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Department policies are contained in the Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM), Department of Health and Human Services Reference Tables Manual (RFT), and Department of Health and Human Services Emergency Relief Manual (ERM).

The Food Assistance Program (FAP) is funded under the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) established by the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, 7 USC 2011 through 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 through 400.3011.

The Department's OIG requests IPV hearings for the following cases:

- 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 OI amount for the FIP, SDA, CDC, MA and FAP programs is \$500 or more, or
 - the total OI amount is less than \$500, 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.

Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual BAM 720 (October 1, 2017), pp 12-13.

When a client group receives more benefits than it is entitled to receive, the Department must attempt to recoup the overissuance. Department of Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 700 (October 1, 2018), p 1.

Federal regulations provide the following definition of intentional program violations:

Definition of intentional Program violation. Intentional Program violations 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).

Respondent acknowledged her duties and responsibilities including the duty to use FAP benefits in a manner consistent with the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 on an application for assistance dated August 2018. Respondent did not have an apparent physical or mental impairment that would limit the understanding or ability to fulfill this requirement.

The Department has the burden of establishing by clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV). The clear and convincing evidence standard, which is the most demanding standard applied in civil cases, is

established where there is evidence so clear, direct, and weighty and convincing that a conclusion can be drawn without hesitancy of the truth of the precise facts in issue. *Smith v Anonymous Joint Enterprise*, 487 Mich 102; 793 NW2d 533 (2010), reh den 488 Mich 860; 793 NW2d 559 (2010).

Clear and convincing proof is that which produces in the mind of the trier of fact a firm belief or conviction as to the truth of the precise facts in issue. Evidence may be uncontroverted and yet not be clear and convincing. Conversely, evidence may be clear and convincing even if contradicted. *Id.*

Trafficking includes the buying, selling, or stealing or otherwise effecting an exchange of FAP benefits issued and accessed via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, card numbers and personal identification numbers (PINs), or by manual voucher and signature, for cash or consideration other than eligible food, either directly, indirectly, in complicity or collusion with others, or acting alone. Trafficking also includes attempting to buy, sell, steal, or otherwise affect an exchange of FAP benefits issued and accessed via Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, card numbers and personal identification numbers (PINs), or by manual voucher and signatures, for cash or consideration other than eligible food, either directly, indirectly, in complicity or collusion with others, or acting alone. BAM 700, p 2.

FAP trafficking is a fraudulent transfer of benefits that must be established by clear and convincing evidence and must never be presumed. Fraud may be established by circumstantial evidence and can be inferred from the evidence with facts which are inconsistent with an honest person. See *Foodland Distributors v Al-Naimi*, 220 Mich App 453 (1996), p 381.

A court or hearing decision that finds a client committed IPV disqualifies that client from receiving program benefits. BAM 720, p. 15-16. A disqualified recipient remains a member of an active group as long as the disqualified person lives with them, and other eligible group members may continue to receive benefits. BAM 720, p. 16.

The hearing record does not contain any direct evidence, in the form of witness statements, video or photographic evidence, or admissions from the Respondent, that the Respondent trafficked in FAP benefits. Instead, the Department's case rests wholly on circumstantial evidence.

The Department's representative presented as a knowledgeable witness who provided a credible account of an investigation of FAP benefits that were used to make purchases after the grantee died.

The hearing record supports a finding that Respondent used FAP benefits that had been granted to a person outside her household to make purchases totaling \$[REDACTED]. An unlawful transfer of FAP benefits fits the Department's definition of FAP trafficking and created an overissuance in the amount of the benefits that were transferred. On May [REDACTED] 2023, Respondent admitted to the facts revealed by the Department's investigation and understood that she would be disqualified from FAP as a result.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Department established by clear and convincing evidence that the Respondent intentionally used the FAP benefits of another person in a manner other than authorized by the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, 7 USC 2011 to 2036a, and that fits the Department's definition of benefit trafficking in Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 720 (October 1, 2017), pp 1-22.

Clients who commit an IPV are disqualified for a standard disqualification period except when a court orders a different period, or except when the OI relates to MA. BAM 720, p. 13. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 710 (January 1, 2018), p. 2. Clients are disqualified for periods of one year for the first IPV, two years for the second IPV, lifetime disqualification for the third IPV, and ten years for a FAP concurrent receipt of benefits. BAM 720, p. 16.

The record evidence indicates that this is Respondent's first established IPV violation.

The Department has established an Intentional Program Violation (IPV).

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 Intentional Program Violation (IPV).
2. Respondent did receive an overissuance of Food Assistance Program (FAP) benefits in the amount of \$[REDACTED]
3. The Department is ORDERED to initiate recoupment procedures for the amount of \$[REDACTED] in accordance with Department policy.
4. It is FURTHER ORDERED that Respondent be disqualified from the Food Assistance Program (FAP) for a period of 12 months.

KS/dm



Kevin Scully

Administrative Law Judge

Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings
and Rules (MOAHR)

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
Renee Olian
Kalamazoo County DHHS
**MDHHS-Kalamazoo-
Hearings@michigan.gov**

Policy-Recoupment

StebbinsN

MOAHR

Via-First Class Mail :

Respondent

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]