



Date Mailed: December 15, 2025
Docket No.: 25-038155
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] MI [REDACTED]

This is an important legal document. Please have someone translate the document.

هذه وثيقة قانونية مهمة. يرجى أن يكون هناك شخص ما يترجم المستند.

এটি একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আইনি ডকুমেন্ট। দয়া করে কেউ দস্তাবেজ অনুবাদ করুন।

Este es un documento legal importante. Por favor, que alguien traduzca el documento.

这是一份重要的法律文件。请让别人翻译文件。

Ky është një dokument ligjor i rëndësishëm. Ju lutem, kini dikë ta përktheni dokumentin.

Date Mailed: December 15, 2025

Docket No.: 25-038155

Case 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 telephone hearing was held via Microsoft Teams on December 11, 2025. Petitioner appeared and was unrepresented. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) was represented by Tiffany Willingham, specialist, and William Shoulders, manager.

ISSUE

The issue is whether MDHHS properly denied Petitioner's Family Independence Program (FIP) application.

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 [REDACTED] 2025, Petitioner applied for FIP benefits.
1. On September 22, 2025, MDHHS received returned mail sent to Petitioner's most recently reported mailing address. MDHHS previously received returned mail on August 28, September 4, and September 10, 2025.
2. On September 25, 2025, MDHHS mailed Petitioner a Verification Checklist (VCL) requesting Petitioner to contact MDHHS by October 6, 2025, with a current phone number and/or address.
3. As of September 25, 2025, MDHHS had a working phone number for Petitioner.
4. On October 6, 2025, MDHHS interviewed Petitioner who confirmed her mailing address as correct.

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5. On October 8, 2025, MDHHS sent Petitioner notice that Petitioner's FIP application was denied due to "Verification of Unable to Locate household" not being returned.
 6. On October 15, 2025, Petitioner requested a hearing to dispute the denial of FIP benefits.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The FIP was established pursuant to the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-193, and 42 USC 601 to 679c. MDHHS administers FIP pursuant to 45 CFR 233to 45 CFR 261; MCL 400.10; the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1 *et seq.*; and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3101 to R 400.3131. FIP 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 denial of FIP benefits. Exhibit A, pp. 4-6. Petitioner applied for cash benefits on ██████████ 2025. Exhibit A, pp. 9-15. A Notice of Case Action dated October 8, 2025, stated that MDHHS denied Petitioner's application due to "Verification of Unable to Locate household" not being returned. Exhibit A, pp. 33-36.

For all programs, MDHHS is to tell the client what verification is required, how to obtain it, and the due date. BAM 130 (October 2023) p. 3. MDHHS is to use the DHS-3503, Verification Checklist (VCL), to request verification. *Id.* MDHHS is to allow the client 10 calendar days (or other time limit specified in policy) to provide the verification that is requested. *Id.*, p. 7. MDHHS is to send a negative action notice when:

- The client indicates refusal to provide a verification, or
- The time period given has elapsed and the client has not made a reasonable effort to provide it. *Id.*

MDHHS mailed Petitioner a VCL on September 25, 2025. Exhibit A, pp. 16-18. The VCL requested Petitioner to contact MDHHS by October 6, 2025, with a current phone number or mailing address. *Id.* The VCL sent by MDHHS was prompted by returned mail sent to Petitioner's most recently reported address. MDHHS received returned mail from Petitioner on August 28, September 4, September 10, and September 22, 2025. Exhibit A, pp. 25-32. Petitioner testified that she has consistently resided at her reported address. Petitioner also testified that she cannot afford to care for her yard which makes it appear that her home is abandoned; as a result, the United States Postal Service (USPS) did not deliver mail to her residence for a period.¹

MDHHS contended that Petitioner's failure to return address verification to MDHHS justified the denial of FIP benefits. MDHHS's contention was unpersuasive for two

¹ Petitioner testified that she has spoken with the USPS and that she now receives mail more reliably.

reasons. First, the VCL sent to Petitioner asked Petitioner for an address or phone number where she could be reached. There was no evidence suggesting that MDHHS did not have a current phone number for Petitioner. Secondly, it was not disputed that MDHHS interviewed Petitioner by telephone on October 6, 2025, and that Petitioner confirmed her mailing address as correct. Exhibit A, pp. 19-24. Petitioner's confirmation of the correct mailing address complied with the VCL request.²

Given the evidence, Petitioner complied with MDHHS's request to contact MDHHS with a correct mailing address or phone number. Thus, the denial of FIP benefits based on "Verification of Unable to Locate household" was improper. As a remedy, Petitioner is entitled to a reprocessing of her FIP application dated [REDACTED] 2025.

DECISION AND ORDER

The administrative law judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds that MDHHS improperly denied Petitioner's FIP benefit application. MDHHS is ordered to commence the following actions within 10 days of the date of mailing of this decision:

- (1) Reregister and reprocess Petitioner's FIP application dated [REDACTED] 2025, subject to the finding that Petitioner did not fail to comply with the VCL dated September 25, 2025; and
- (2) Issue notice and benefit supplements, if any, in accordance with policy.

The actions taken by MDHHS are **REVERSED**.


CHRISTIAN GARDOCKI
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE

² Petitioner testified that MDHHS subsequently confirmed her address as correct after making collateral contact with the landlord.

APPEAL RIGHTS: Petitioner may appeal this Hearing Decision to the circuit court. Rules for appeals to the circuit court can be found in the Michigan Court Rules (MCR), including MCR 7.101 to MCR 7.123, available at the Michigan Courts website at courts.michigan.gov. The Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules (MOAHR) cannot provide legal advice, but assistance may be available through the State Bar of Michigan at <https://lrs.michbar.org> or Michigan Legal Help at <https://michiganlegalhelp.org>. A copy of the circuit court appeal should be sent to MOAHR. A circuit court appeal may result in a reversal of the Hearing Decision.

Either party who disagrees with this Hearing Decision may also send a written request for a rehearing and/or reconsideration to MOAHR within 30 days of the mailing date of this Hearing Decision. The request should include Petitioner's name, the docket number from page 1 of this Hearing Decision, an explanation of the specific reasons for the request, and any documents supporting the request. The request should be sent to MOAHR

- by email to MOAHR-BSD-Support@michigan.gov, **OR**
- by fax at (517) 763-0155, **OR**
- by mail addressed to
Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules
Rehearing/Reconsideration Request
P.O. Box 30639
Lansing Michigan 48909-8139

Documents sent via email are not secure and can be faxed or mailed to avoid any potential risks. Requests MOAHR receives more than 30 days from the mailing date of this Hearing Decision may be considered untimely and dismissed.

Via Electronic Mail:

Respondent

WAYNE-CONNER-DHHS

4733 CONNER ST

DETROIT, MI 48215

MDHHS-WAYNE-57-HEARINGS@MICHIGAN.GOV

Via First Class Mail:

Petitioner

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] MI [REDACTED]

