

ISSUE

Did the Department properly deny Sister's REDACTED 2025 application for State Emergency Relief (SER) burial services assistance for the benefit of Decedent?

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, the Department received a SER application from Sister for burial services assistance for Decedent. Sister reported that Decedent passed away on September 21, 2025, and that her burial/cremation was October 15, 2025. Sister also reported that she had signed a contract with a funeral home for a cremation with memorial service at a cost of \$1,950 and that no contribution from family or friends or death benefits was expected to be received. The Department assigned the application a case number ending in REDACTED. (Exhibit A, pp. 5 – 10).
1. On November 6, 2025, the Department sent Sister a Verification Checklist (VCL) that requested verification of the amount for burial services by either a statement of funeral goods and services or an actual bill or written statement from the provider. The VCL informed Sister that verifications were due by November 13, 2025. (Exhibit A, p. 11).
2. On November 14, 2025, the Department sent Sister a SER Decision Notice (SERDN) in case number ending REDACTED that denied burial services assistance because the required verifications were not returned. (Exhibit A, pp. 12 – 13).
3. On REDACTED 2025, the Department received a second application from Sister for burial services assistance for Decedent. Respondent reported that a service was held for Decedent on November 8, 2025, and that she was buried on November 21, 2025. The Department assigned the second application a case number ending in REDACTED.
4. On November 25, 2025, the Department received multiple documents from Sister, including documents labeled as funeral home statements. (Exhibit A, p. 14).
5. On November 26, 2025, the Department sent Sister a SERDN in case number ending REDACTED that denied burial services assistance because the application was submitted more than 20 days after burial.
6. On January 13, 2026, the Department received a request for hearing from Sister in case number ending REDACTED disputing the Department's denial of the SER application. (Exhibit A, p. 3).

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 State Emergency Relief (SER) program is established by the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b. The SER program is administered by the Department (formerly known as the Department of Human Services) pursuant to MCL 400.10 and Mich Admin Code, R 400.7001-.7049.

Sister requested a hearing to dispute the Department's denial of her SER application for burial services assistance. In the hearing request, Sister specifically identified case number ending REDACTED. The Department denied Sister's application in case number ending REDACTED for failure to return required verification by the due date.

At the hearing, Sister testified that she submitted a second application for SER burial services assistance to the Department on REDACTED 2025. Although the Department initially denied that it received a second application, during the hearing it discovered that a second application was received but assigned case number ending REDACTED. The Department testified that the second application was denied because it was submitted more than 20 days after burial. Although Sister attempted to address the denial of the second application during the hearing, because she only identified the case number ending REDACTED in the hearing request, and the Department had only responded to and provided documentation concerning the denial in that case, the hearing proceeded to address only the first application. Sister was advised that she could request a hearing if she disputed denial of the second SER application under case number ending REDACTED in accordance with the SERDN dated November 26, 2025.

SER provides burial services assistance when the decedent's estate is not sufficient to pay for burial, cremation, and other costs. ERM 306 (October 2024), p. 1. An application for SER burial assistance must be made no later than 20 business days after the date the burial, cremation, or donation takes place. ERM 103 (October 2025), p. 2; ERM 306, p. 1. As part of the application process, the Department must verify certain information, and verification for burial services requires that the Department receive a statement of goods and services, or the equivalent, from the provider that includes an itemization of all services provided, charges, and payments made or expected. ERM 306, p. 10. The statement must be signed by an employee of the funeral home and the person making the SER application. ERM 306, p. 10.

To obtain verifications, the Department must tell the applicant what verifications are required and where to return verifications. ERM 103, pp. 6 – 7. Applicants must cooperate with the Department by providing all requested verifications within their ability. ERM 102 (October 2020), p. 1. Verifications are due eight calendar days from the date the SER

VCL is sent, and the date the VCL is sent is counted as the first day of the eight calendar-day calculation. ERM 103, pp. 6 – 7. If an applicant refuses or fails to take action or provide information within their abilities, the SER application will be denied. ERM 102, p. 1; ERM 103, p. 7. Verifications are considered timely if received by the date they are due. ERM 103, p. 7.

In this case, the record established that the Department sent Sister a VCL on November 6, 2025, that requested verification by November 13, 2025, of the amount for burial services by either a statement of funeral goods and services or an actual bill or written statement from the provider. There was no dispute that Sister did not provide the required verification to the Department by November 13, 2025, and the Department denied Sister's SER application on Friday, November 14, 2025.

Although Sister testified that she did not receive the VCL until November 18, 2025, the Department credibly testified that it received a telephone call from Sister on November 17, 2025, which was a Monday, and that she reported that she received the VCL 'over the weekend', which was after the November 13 due date. Thus, although there was no dispute that Sister received the VCL, the issue presented is whether she received it before the November 13, 2025 due date.

The proper addressing and mailing of correspondence creates a legal presumption that it was received, which may be rebutted by evidence. *Stacey v Sankovich*, 19 Mich App 688; 173 NW2d 225 (1969). Although Sister argued that she did not receive the VCL until after the due date, she did not present any evidence to rebut the presumption of timely receipt. Moreover, inconsistencies in the dates Sister provided in the two applications and her testimony regarding the date she called the Department further called into question Sister's testimony regarding the date she received the VCL. Additionally, Sister did not dispute that the VCL was properly addressed. Accordingly, Sister failed to rebut the presumption that she received the VCL before the due date.

Therefore, because Sister did not provide the requested verifications by the November 13, 2025 due date, the Department properly denied Sister's REDACTED 2025, application for SER burial assistance for failure to provide required verification by the due date.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, finds that the Department acted in accordance with Department policy when it denied Sister's REDACTED 2025, application for SER burial assistance for failure to return required verifications.

Accordingly, the Department's decision is **AFFIRMED**.