



STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Jim Justice
Governor

BOARD OF REVIEW
1400 Virginia Street
Oak Hill, WV 25901

Bill J. Crouch
Cabinet Secretary

June 21, 2017

[REDACTED]

RE: [REDACTED] v. WV DHHR
ACTION NO.: 17-BOR-1673

Dear Ms. [REDACTED]

Enclosed is a copy of the decision resulting from the hearing held in the above-referenced matter.

In arriving at a decision, the State Hearing Officer is governed by the Public Welfare Laws of West Virginia and the rules and regulations established by the Department of Health and Human Resources. These same laws and regulations are used in all cases to assure that all persons are treated alike.

You will find attached an explanation of possible actions you may take if you disagree with the decision reached in this matter.

Sincerely,

Kristi Logan
State Hearing Officer
Member, State Board of Review

Encl: Appellant's Recourse to Hearing Decision
Form IG-BR-29

cc: Danita Bragg, [REDACTED] County DHHR

**WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES
BOARD OF REVIEW**

██████████,

Defendant,

v.

Action Number: 17-BOR-1673

**WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES,**

Movant.

DECISION OF STATE HEARING OFFICER

INTRODUCTION

This is the decision of the State Hearing Officer resulting from an Administrative Disqualification Hearing for ██████████ requested by the Movant on April 19, 2017. This hearing was held in accordance with the provisions found in Chapter 700 of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources' Common Chapters Manual and Federal Regulations at 7 CFR §273.16. The hearing was convened on June 6, 2017.

The matter before the Hearing Officer arises from a request by the Movant for a determination as to whether the Defendant has committed an Intentional Program Violation and should be disqualified from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for twelve (12) months.

At the hearing, the Movant appeared by Danita Bragg, Criminal Investigator. The Defendant failed to appear. The Movant's representative was sworn and the following documents were admitted into evidence.

Movant's Exhibits:

- M-1 Code of Federal Regulations – 7 CFR §273.16
- M-2 Unites States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Survey and Photographs, Notice of Disqualification dated February 17, 2016 and Electronic Benefit Transactions (EBT) for Horton's Convenience Center
- M-3 EBT Transaction History for Defendant from July 2013-September 2016
- M-4 Statement from ██████████ dated March 22, 2017
- M-5 Statement from ██████████ dated March 22, 2017

- M-6 Screen Print of Local SNAP Retailers retrieved from www.fns.usda.gov
- M-7 SNAP Application dated August 31, 2015
- M-8 West Virginia Income Maintenance Manual §20.2
- M-9 Suspect Interview Appointment Letter dated September 7, 2016, and Advance Notice of Administrative Disqualification Hearing Waiver dated April 4, 2017

After a review of the record, including testimony, exhibits, and stipulations admitted into evidence at the hearing, and after assessing the credibility of all witnesses and weighing the evidence in consideration of the same, the Hearing Officer sets forth the following Findings of Fact.

FINDINGS OF FACT

- 1) The Movant alleged that the Defendant committed an Intentional Program Violation by trafficking her SNAP benefits and requested that a SNAP penalty of twelve (12) months be imposed against her.
- 2) The Defendant was notified of the hearing by scheduling order sent by certified mail on April 20, 2017. The scheduling order was accepted and signed for on April 22, 2017, yet the Defendant failed to appear for the hearing or provide good cause for her failure to do so. In accordance to 7 CFR §273.16(e)(4) and West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources' Common Chapters Manual, §740.20, the hearing was held without the Defendant in attendance.
- 3) [REDACTED] was disqualified as a SNAP vendor by the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) division for trafficking SNAP benefits in April 2016. The Defendant was implicated as allegedly trafficking her SNAP benefits with [REDACTED], based on a pattern of purchases made with her EBT card (Exhibits M-2 and M-3).
- 4) [REDACTED] is a rural, 1,800 square-foot convenience store which carries a limited amount of fresh meats, dairy items, breads, snacks, frozen foods, and various sundries. [REDACTED] did not provide shopping carts or baskets for customer use, and photographs taken of the store's inventory showed some empty shelving (Exhibit M-2).
- 5) The Movant alleged that the Defendant was trafficking her SNAP benefits with the store, either purchasing non-food items or "running a tab" at the store, and paying off this account with her SNAP benefits.
- 6) The Defendant had several transactions with [REDACTED] on the same day within a short period of time, as many as four (4) transactions in one day. The Defendant made purchases at neighboring grocery stores with her EBT card in between the multiple same-day transactions with [REDACTED] (Exhibit M-3).

APPLICABLE POLICY

Code of Federal Regulations 7 CFR §273.16, establishes that an individual making a false or misleading statement, or misrepresenting, concealing or withholding facts, violating the Food Stamp Program, or any State statute for the purpose of acquiring, receiving, possessing or trafficking of coupons, authorization cards or reusable documents used as part of an automated benefit delivery system has committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV).

Code of Federal Regulations 7 CFR §271.2 defines trafficking as the buying, selling, stealing, or otherwise effecting an exchange of SNAP benefits issued and accessed via EBT cards, card numbers and personal identification numbers, for cash or consideration other than eligible food, either directly, indirectly, in complicity or collusion with others or acting alone.

West Virginia Income Maintenance Manual §20.C.2 defines an IPV and establishes that IPV's include: making false or misleading statements, misrepresentations, concealing or withholding information, and committing any act that violates the Food Stamp Act of 1977, SNAP regulations, or any State statute related to the use, presentation, transfer, acquisition, receipt, or possession of SNAP benefits. Once an IPV has been established, a disqualification period must be imposed on the Assistance Group (AG) member who committed the violation. Furthermore, IPV claims must be established for trafficking-related offenses. Claims arising from trafficking-related offenses are the value of the trafficking benefits as determined by the individual's admission, adjudication, or documentation that forms the basis of the trafficking determination.

West Virginia Income Maintenance Manual §9.1 sets forth the penalties for individuals found guilty of an IPV as follows: First Offense, twelve (12) month disqualification; Second Offense, twenty-four (24) month disqualification; Third Offense, permanent disqualification.

DISCUSSION

Federal regulations define trafficking as the exchange of SNAP benefits accessed through an EBT card for cash or consideration other than eligible food. An Intentional Program Violation occurs when an individual is found to have trafficked his or her SNAP benefits.

The pattern of the Defendant's multiple same-day transactions with [REDACTED] were indicative of trafficking as these transactions could not be explained as forgetting an item, and returning to make another purchase. The Defendant would visit neighboring grocery stores within the times she conducted business with [REDACTED] suggesting that she was using her EBT card to pay off an account with [REDACTED], while purchasing food at other businesses.

The Defendant did not appear for the hearing to dispute the allegations of trafficking.

The Defendant is found to have trafficked her SNAP benefits with [REDACTED].

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

- 1) An Intentional Program Violation occurs when an individual is found to have trafficked his or her SNAP benefits.
- 2) The Defendant trafficked her SNAP benefits with [REDACTED].
- 3) A twelve-month SNAP penalty will be applied to the Defendant as this is her first offense.

DECISION

It is the finding of the State Hearing Officer that the Defendant committed an Intentional Program Violation. The Defendant will be disqualified from participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for twelve (12) months, effective August 1, 2017.

ENTERED this 21st day of June 2017

**Kristi Logan
State Hearing Officer**