



State of West Virginia
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES
Office of Inspector General
Board of Review
4190 Washington Street, West
Charleston, WV 25313

Earl Ray Tomblin
Governor

Patsy A. Hardy, FACHE, MSN, MBA
Cabinet Secretary

December 2, 2010

Dear -----:

Attached is a copy of the findings of fact and conclusions of law on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Administrative Disqualification Hearing (ADH) held November 30, 2010 for the purpose of determining whether or not you committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV).

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.

Eligibility for SNAP is based on current policy and regulations. Some of these regulations state as follows: 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 the Food Stamp Act, the SNAP Regulations, or any State statute relating to the use presentation, transfer, acquisition, receipt or possession of SNAP benefits. Individuals found to have committed an act of Intentional Program Violation will be ineligible for a specified time determined by the number of previous Intentional Program Violation disqualifications. (West Virginia Income Maintenance Manual §20.2 and Code of Federal Regulations - 7 CFR §273.16).

The information submitted at the hearing showed that you intentionally provided false information about your household's composition in order to receive SNAP for which you were not entitled.

It is the decision of the State Hearing Officer to **uphold** the Agency's proposal to apply a one (1) year SNAP disqualification penalty against you based on an Intentional Program Violation. Your penalty begins February 1, 2011.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Henson
State Hearing Officer
Member, State Board of Review

cc: Erika H. Young, Chairman, Board of Review/Jennifer Butcher, Kanawha DHHR

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

-----,

Defendant

v.

Action Number: 10-BOR-2090

**West Virginia Department of
Health and Human Resources,**

Movant

DECISION OF STATE HEARING OFFICER

I. INTRODUCTION:

This is a report of the State Hearing Officer resulting from an Administrative Disqualification Hearing for ----- . This hearing was held in accordance with the provisions found in the Common Chapters Manual, Chapter 700 of the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, and was convened on November 30, 2010.

II. PROGRAM PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is to provide an effective means of utilizing the nation's abundance of food "to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's population and raise levels of nutrition among low-income households.". This is accomplished through the issuance of benefits to households who meet the eligibility criteria established by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

III. PARTICIPANTS:

Jennifer Butcher, State Repayment Investigator, Department Representative

Presiding at the Hearing was Cheryl Henson, State Hearing Officer and a member of the State Board of Review.

IV. QUESTION TO BE DECIDED:

The question to be decided is whether the Defendant committed an intentional program violation and should be disqualified for one year from participation in SNAP.

V. APPLICABLE POLICY:

7 CFR § 273.16 USDA Code of Federal Regulations
Common Chapters Manual Chapter 700, Appendix A
West Virginia Income Maintenance Manual §1.2, 9.1.A.2.h and 20.2

VI. LISTING OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE ADMITTED:

Department's Exhibits:

- D-1 Benefit Recovery Referral Screen from RAPIDS dated November 19, 2010
- D-2 WV Income Maintenance Manual §1.2.E
- D-3 Code of Federal Regulations 7 CFR 273.16
- D-4 Combined Application Form (CAF) dated December 12, 2008 and Rights and Responsibilities form for same date
- D-5 CAFs dated June 4, 2009 and December 3, 2009 along with Rights and Responsibilities forms for the same date
- D-6 Narrative and other screens from Department's computer system (6 pages)
- D-7 Income Verification from [REDACTED] Inc. dated September 12, 2010 and [REDACTED] Inc. dated September 7, 2010 (20 pages)
- D-8 Case comments from Department's computer system and Tax Records (3 pages)
- D-9 Driver History Inquiry screen from Department's computer system cross-match with Department of Motor Vehicles' computer system
- D-10 WV Income Maintenance Manual Section 2.2.B
- D-11 WV Income Maintenance Manual Section 2.2.B.1
- D-12 WV Income Maintenance Manual Section 2.2.B.4
- D-13 Food Stamp Claim Determination forms and supporting documents
- D-14 WV Income Maintenance Manual Section 20.6.A
- D-15 Notification of Intent to Disqualify forms dated September 23, 2010
- D-16 WV Income Maintenance Manual Section 20.2.C.2
- D-17 WV Income Maintenance Manual Section 20.2.E.1
- D-18 WV Income Maintenance Manual Section 20.2.F.2

Claimant's Exhibits:

None

VII. FINDINGS OF FACT:

- 1) A request for an Administrative Disqualification Hearing (ADH) was received by the Board of Review from the Department of Health and Human Resources (Department) on October 26, 2010. The Department contends that the Defendant has committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) and made a fraudulent statement or misrepresentation regarding her household composition in order to receive SNAP (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program), and is recommending that she be disqualified from participation in SNAP for a period of one (1) year.
- 2) Notification of the November 30, 2010 hearing was mailed to the Defendant on or about October 26, 2010 via first class mail delivery, as the Defendant is a current recipient of benefits through the Department and resides at an address known to be good by the Department.
- 3) The hearing was convened as scheduled at 9:00 a.m. and as of 9:21 a.m. the Defendant failed to appear or notify the Board of Review of any conflict preventing her from appearing. As set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations found at §7 CFR 273.16 (e) (4), and State Policy (West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Common Chapters Manual, Chapter 740.20), the hearing was conducted without the Defendant in attendance.
- 4) On or about September 23, 2010 the Department sent the Defendant a Notification of Intent to Disqualify (D-15) form, indicating that the Department had reason to believe she intentionally violated a food stamp rule. The form also included the following:

Based on the evidence developed through our investigation, the agency believes that ----- intentionally violated the food stamp program by: failing to report that she was living with the father of her child and report his income. The evidence to prove this allegation consists of case comments from Child Support Enforcement.

- 5) The Department presented evidence to show that the Defendant completed a SNAP application review interview on December 12, 2008 (D-4) at which time she reported that her household consisted of just herself and her daughter, and that the absent parent, -----, was living at a different address in [REDACTED] West Virginia. She signed the Rights and Responsibilities form (D-4) indicating she understood her responsibility to report accurate and truthful information and the penalties for failure to do so.
- 6) The Department also presented evidence to show (D-5) that the Defendant completed SNAP review interviews on June 4, 2009 and December 3, 2009, at which time she again reported that ----- did not live in her household. She signed the Rights and Responsibilities forms (D-5) on both dates again indicating she understood her responsibility to report accurate and truthful information and the penalties for failure to do so.
- 7) Department's evidence in exhibit six (D-6) includes case comments from the Department's Child Support Unit beginning July 8, 2008 in which the worker documented that the Defendant reported at that time that she and ----- were "together", and that "postal and employer have confirmed this." Another comment entry dated December 15, 2008 documents that a hearing was held on December 12, 2008 before Judge [REDACTED] pursuant to a complaint for child support, and that the parties are living together with the child. The comment adds that child support was "set at zero per month" effective 1/1/09. Another case comment dated December

17, 2008 documents that the December 12, 2008 temporary order was entered into the Department's system and that the parties are living together with the child. The documentation also shows the Department entered -----'s address into its computer system showing he lives at the Defendant's address.

- 8) The Department presented verification of income for ----- (D-7) from both [REDACTED] beginning September 1, 2008, and [REDACTED] beginning January 27, 2009, which show that he utilized the same address as the Defendant. These records show that ----- worked for [REDACTED] from September 1, 2008 through February 1, 2009 and received earned income from this employer during that timeframe that was never considered in the Defendant's SNAP case. The records also show he worked for [REDACTED] from January 27, 2009 through at least September 10, 2010 and that his earnings from this employer also were never considered in the Defendant's SNAP case.
- 9) Additional evidence from the Department (D-8) shows that a Department worker documented on May 26, 2010 that she spoke with the property manager for the residence rented to the Defendant and was told by her that she knew both the Defendant and ----- and that they originally lived together in Apartment D, but had recently moved to Apartment B. The manager verified the rent amount and the fact that it had increased with the new move to the larger apartment.
- 10) The Department's evidence also shows that the Department of Motor Vehicles' records (D-9) indicate that ----- utilizes the same physical address as the Defendant. Those records were last updated on June 2, 2010.
- 11) The Department's representative, Jennifer Butcher, a SNAP Repayment Investigator, testified that she reviewed the Defendant's case file and determined that she has received benefits since December 1, 2008 and several applications as well as rights and responsibilities forms have been read and signed by her, indicating the understanding of her responsibility to report accurate and truthful information and the penalties for failure to do so.
- 12) West Virginia Income Maintenance Manual §1.2 (E) states that it is the client's responsibility to provide information about his circumstances so the worker is able to make a correct decision about his eligibility.
- 13) West Virginia Income Maintenance Manual § 20.2 (C) (2) states in pertinent part:

IPV's include making false or misleading statement, misrepresentations, concealing or withholding information, and committing any act that violates the Food Stamp Act of 1977, Food Stamp regulations, or any State statute related to the use, presentation, transfer, acquisition, receipt, or possession of Food Stamps.

The individual(s) who is found to have committed an IPV is ineligible to participate in the program for a specified time, depending on the number of offenses committed.

Once an IPV is established, a disqualification penalty is imposed on the AG member(s) who committed the IPV.

- 14) Common Chapters Manual 700, Appendix A, Section B, provides that an Intentional Program Violation 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 the Food Stamp Act, the Food Stamp Program Regulations, or any State statute relating to the use, presentation, transfer, acquisition, receipt or possession of food stamp benefits.
- 15) Common Chapters Manual 700, Appendix A, Section G, states that the State Hearing Officer shall base the determination of Intentional Program Violation on clear and convincing evidence which demonstrates that the household member(s) committed, and intended to commit, an Intentional Program Violation as defined in Section B of this Appendix.
- 16) The Defendant signed numerous Rights and Responsibilities forms (D-4 and D-5) thereby acknowledging the following pertinent responsibilities:
 - 4) I understand if I am found (by court action or an administrative disqualification hearing) to have committed an act of intentional program violation, I will not receive SNAP benefits as follows: First Offense – one year; Second Offense – two years; Third Offense – permanently.
 - 48) I also understand that if I give incorrect or false information or if I fail to report changes that I am required to report, I may be required to repay any benefits I receive and I may also be prosecuted for fraud. I also understand that any person who obtains or attempts to obtain benefits from DHHR by means of a willfully false statement or misrepresentation or by impersonation or any other fraudulent device can be charged with fraud.
 - 49) I certify that all statements on this form have been read by me or read to me and that I understand them. I certify that all the information I have given is true and correct and I accept these responsibilities.
- 17) West Virginia Income Maintenance Manual §9.1.A.2.h states:

Intentional Program Violation (IPV)

Persons who have been found guilty of an IPV are disqualified as follows:

 - 1st Offense: 1 year
 - 2nd Offense: 2 years
 - 3rd Offense: Permanent

VIII. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

- 1) The policy and regulations that govern SNAP state that a SNAP violation has occurred when an individual intentionally makes a false or misleading statement, or misrepresented,

concealed or withheld facts relating to the use, presentation, transfer, acquisition, receipt or possession of SNAP benefits.

- 2) The regulations state there must be clear and convincing evidence that demonstrates the Defendant intentionally committed an Intentional Program Violation.
- 3) The Defendant clearly was aware of her responsibility to report truthful and accurate information and the penalties involved for failing to do so. She read and signed numerous Rights and Responsibilities forms during the period in question which clearly inform her of these responsibilities.
- 4) The evidence is also clear in that the Defendant intentionally reported false information about her household composition in order to receive SNAP. She reported on several occasions that her household consisted of just herself and her child, when the evidence clearly shows that she also lived with her child's father, -----, who was employed throughout the period. She withheld this information during numerous interviews with the Department.
- 5) The Department was correct in its determination that the Defendant has committed an Intentional Program Violation by intentionally reporting false information about her household composition.

IX. DECISION:

The Agency's proposal to apply a one (1) year Food Stamp disqualification penalty is **upheld**. The penalty will begin February 1, 2011.

X. RIGHT OF APPEAL:

See Attachment

XI. ATTACHMENTS:

The Claimant's Recourse to Hearing Decision

Form IG-BR-29

ENTERED this 2nd Day of December, 2010.

**Cheryl Henson
State Hearing Officer**