

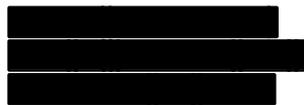


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STATE OF WISCONSIN
Division of Hearings and Appeals

In the Matter of



DECISION
Case #: FOF - 174115

PRELIMINARY RECITALS

On May 5, 2016, below named Petitioner filed a hearing request under Wis. Admin. Code §HA 3.03 and 7 C.F.R. § 273.16 to disqualify the Respondent from the FoodShare Program for one year. The hearing was held on June 17, 2016, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The issue for determination is whether the Respondent committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV).

NOTE: Judicial notice is being taken of the plea agreement and conviction in case [REDACTED] from the Federal District Court.

There appeared at that time the following persons:

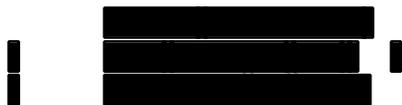
PARTIES IN INTEREST:

Petitioner:

Department of Health Services
1 West Wilson Street, Room 651
Madison, WI 53703

By: [REDACTED], Income Maintenance Specialist Advanced
Milwaukee Enrollment Services
1220 West Vliet Street, Room 106
Milwaukee, WI 53205

Respondent:



ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:
Mayumi Ishii
Division of Hearings and Appeals

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Petitioner (CARES # [REDACTED]) is a resident of Milwaukee County who received FoodShare benefits between August 2011 and June 2012. She generally received her benefits on the 5th of the month. Between September 2011 and December 2011, she received \$757.00 in benefits. (Exhibit 5)
2. On June 27, 2011, the Respondent completed an on-line ACCESS application which contained a penalty warning her about the consequences of selling or trading her benefits, including disqualification from the program. The Respondent electronically signed the application, indicating that she understood the penalties for providing false information or breaking the rules. (Exhibit 9)
3. On November 10, 2010, the agency sent the Respondent an Eligibility and Benefits booklet that warned her about the consequences of selling or trading her benefits, including disqualification from the program. (Exhibits 10 and 11)
4. In August 2010, the owner of [REDACTED] became an authorized SNAP vendor, but he was no longer a subcontractor distributing seafood and meat. Instead, he was purchasing FoodShare benefits for cash, paying the benefit recipients only a percentage of the face value of the card. This enterprise continued until January 2013. (Exhibit 12)
5. On December 5, 2011, an EBT card ending in [REDACTED] and attributed to the Respondent was used to make a \$200 "purchase" with [REDACTED] (Exhibit 13)
6. The card ending in [REDACTED] was issued to the Respondent on June 28, 2011 and was not replaced until October 7, 2013. (Exhibit 14)
7. On May 16, 2015, Milwaukee Enrollment Services (the agency) prepared an Administrative Disqualification Hearing notice, alleging that the Respondent trafficked \$200 in benefits with [REDACTED] on December 5, 2011. (Exhibit 3)

DISCUSSION*Respondent's Non-appearance*

The Respondent did not appear for this hearing. This circumstance is governed by the regulation in 7 C.F.R. §273.16(e)(4), which states in part:

If the household member or its representative cannot be located or fails to appear at a hearing initiated by the State agency without good cause, the hearing shall be conducted without the household member being represented. *Even though the household member is not represented, the hearing official is required to carefully consider the evidence and determine if intentional Program violation was committed based on clear and convincing evidence.* If the household member is found to have committed an intentional program violation but a hearing official later determines that the household member or representative had good cause for not appearing, the previous decision shall no longer remain valid and the State agency shall conduct a new hearing. The hearing official who originally ruled on the case may conduct a new hearing. In instances where the good cause for failure to appear is based upon a showing of nonreceipt of the hearing notice, the household member has 30 days after the date of the written notice of the hearing decision to claim good cause for failure to appear. In all other instances, *the household member has 10 days from the date of the scheduled hearing to present reasons indicating*

a good cause for failure to appear. A hearing official must enter the good cause decision into the record.

Emphasis added

The hearing in this case took place on June 17, 2016. The Respondent was advised of the date and time of the hearing, in an Administrative Disqualification Hearing Notice that was sent to her at an address on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] indicated that this was the Respondent's last known mailing address and that the Respondent had an open FoodShare case. [REDACTED] further indicated that the agency did not receive any returned mail.

The Respondent did not appear at the hearing and the Respondent did not contact the Division of Hearings and Appeals within 10 days to explain her failure to appear. As such, it is found that the Respondent did not have good cause for her non-appearance.

What is an IPV?

An IPV is defined at 7 C.F.R. §273.16(c) as intentionally: making a false or misleading statement or misrepresenting; concealing or withholding facts; or committing any act that constitutes a violation of the Food Stamp Act, federal regulations or any Wisconsin statute relating to the use, presentation, transfer, acquisition, receipt or possession of food stamp coupons or an authorization to participate (ATP) card.

The Department's written policy restates federal law, below:

3.14.1 IPV Disqualification

7 CFR 273.16

A person commits an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) when s/he intentionally:

1. makes a false or misleading statement, or misrepresents, conceals or withholds facts; or
2. commits any act that constitutes a violation of the Food Stamp Act, the Food Stamp Program Regulations, or any Wisconsin statute for the purpose of using, presenting, transferring, acquiring, receiving, possessing or trafficking of FoodShare benefits or QUEST cards.

An IPV may be determined by the following means:

1. Federal, state, or local court order,
2. Administrative Disqualification Hearing (ADH) decision,
3. Pre-charge or pretrial diversion agreement initiated by a local district attorney and signed by the FoodShare recipient in accordance with federal requirements, or
4. Waiver of the right to an ADH signed by the FoodShare recipient in accordance with federal requirements.

FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook, §3.14.1.

The agency may disqualify only the individual who either has been found to have committed the IPV or has signed a waiver or consent agreement, and not the entire household. If disqualified, an individual will be ineligible to participate in the FS program for one year for the first violation, two years for the second violation, and permanently for the third violation. However, any remaining household members must agree to make restitution within 30 days of the date of mailing a written demand letter, or their monthly allotment will be reduced. 7 C.F.R. §273.16(b).

What is the Agency's Burden of Proof?

In order for the agency to establish that an FS recipient has committed an IPV, it has the burden to prove two separate elements by clear and convincing evidence. The recipient must have: 1) committed; and 2) intended to commit an intentional program violation per 7 C.F.R. §273.16(e)(6).

"Clear and convincing evidence" is an intermediate standard of proof which is more than the "preponderance of the evidence" used in most civil cases and less than the "beyond a reasonable doubt" standard used in criminal cases.

In Kuehn v. Kuehn, 11 Wis.2d 15, 26 (1959), the court held that:

Defined in terms of quantity of proof, reasonable certitude or reasonable certainty in ordinary civil cases may be attained by or be based on a mere or fair preponderance of the evidence. Such certainty need not necessarily exclude the probability that the contrary conclusion may be true. In fraud cases it has been stated the preponderance of the evidence should be clear and satisfactory to indicate or sustain a greater degree of certitude. Such degree of certitude has also been defined as being produced by clear, satisfactory, and convincing evidence. Such evidence, however, need not eliminate a reasonable doubt that the alternative or opposite conclusion may be true. In criminal cases, while not normally stated in terms of preponderance, the necessary certitude is universally stated as being beyond a reasonable doubt.

Wisconsin Jury Instruction – Civil 205 is also instructive. It provides:

Clear, satisfactory and convincing evidence is evidence which when weighed against that opposed to it clearly has more convincing power. It is evidence which satisfies and convinces you that "yes" should be the answer because of its greater weight and clear convincing power. "Reasonable certainty" means that you are persuaded based upon a rational consideration of the evidence. Absolute certainty is not required, but a guess is not enough to meet the burden of proof. This burden of proof is known as the "middle burden." The evidence required to meet this burden of proof must be more convincing than merely the greater weight of the credible evidence but may be less than beyond a reasonable doubt.

Further, the *McCormick* treatise states that "it has been persuasively suggested that [the clear and convincing evidence standard of proof] could be more simply and intelligibly translated to the jury if they were instructed that they must be persuaded that the truth of the contention is highly probable." 2 *McCormick on Evidence* § 340 (John W. Strong gen. ed., 4th ed. 1992).

Thus, in order to find that an IPV was committed, the trier of fact must derive from the evidence, a firm conviction as to the existence of each of the two elements even though there may exist a reasonable doubt that the Respondent committed the IPV.

The Merits of the Agency's Case

In the case at hand, Milwaukee Enrollment Services has established, by clear and convincing evidence, that the Respondent was selling her FoodShare benefits on December 5, 2011.

First, the Respondent's EBT card was used to redeem benefits on the 5th of the month, the date she typically received her benefits. The Respondent is the only person who should have had that information.

Second, the Respondent redeemed a whole dollar amount, \$200. This makes it less likely she made a legitimate food purchase. Third, the EBT card that was used was not replaced until October 2013, 22 months after the subject transaction, making it unlikely the Respondent's card was lost or stolen on December 5, 2011. Fourth, during this time, [REDACTED] was no longer a subcontractor distributing meat and seafood; it/he was instead purchasing EBT benefits for a fraction of face value. As such, the Respondent had to have been selling her benefits.

Based upon the foregoing, it is found that the Respondent was trafficking her FoodShare benefits on December 5, 2011.

There is a general rule that a person is presumed to know and intend the probable and natural consequences of his or her own voluntary words or acts. See John F. Jelke Co. v. Beck, 208 Wis. 650 (1932); 31A C.J.S. Evidence §131. Intention is a subjective state of mind to be determined upon all the facts. Lecus v. American Mut. Ins. Co. of Boston, 81 Wis.2d 183 (1977). There is nothing in the record to rebut the presumption that the Respondent intentionally sold her benefits to [REDACTED]. On the contrary, the Respondent was warned about the consequences of selling her benefits when the agency sent her the Eligibility and Benefits booklet in 2010 and she was warned again when she completed her application in June 2011, but she went ahead and sold her benefits, anyway.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Respondent committed an intentional program violation (IPV) by trafficking her benefits with [REDACTED] on December 5, 2011.

THEREFORE, it is

ORDERED

That the IPV for claim number [REDACTED] is sustained and that the Respondent is hereby ineligible to participate in the FoodShare program for a period of one year, effective the first month following the date of receipt of this decision.

REQUEST FOR A REHEARING

You may request a rehearing if you think this decision is based on a serious mistake in the facts or the law or if you have found new evidence that would change the decision. Your request must be **received within 20 days after the date of this decision**. Late requests cannot be granted.

Send your request for rehearing in writing to the Division of Hearings and Appeals, 5005 University Avenue, Suite 201, Madison, WI 53705-5400 **and** to those identified in this decision as "PARTIES IN INTEREST." Your rehearing request must explain what mistake the Administrative Law Judge made and why it is important or you must describe your new evidence and explain why you did not have it at your first hearing. If your request does not explain these things, it will be denied.

The process for requesting a rehearing may be found at Wis. Stat. § 227.49. A copy of the statutes may be found online or at your local library or courthouse.

APPEAL TO COURT

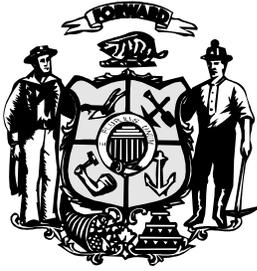
You may also appeal this decision to Circuit Court in the county where you live. Appeals must be filed with the Court **and** served either personally or by certified mail on the Secretary of the Department of Health Services, 1 West Wilson Street, Room 651, **and** on those identified in this decision as "PARTIES

IN INTEREST” **no more than 30 days after the date of this decision** or 30 days after a denial of a timely rehearing (if you request one).

The process for Circuit Court Appeals may be found at Wis. Stat. §§ 227.52 and 227.53. A copy of the statutes may be found online or at your local library or courthouse.

Given under my hand at the City of Milwaukee,
Wisconsin, this 15th day of July, 2016.

\s _____
Mayumi Ishii
Administrative Law Judge
Division of Hearings and Appeals



State of Wisconsin \DIVISION OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS

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Telephone: (608) 266-3096
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The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on July 15, 2016.

Milwaukee Enrollment Services
Public Assistance Collection Unit
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability
[REDACTED]@dhs.wisconsin.gov