



**STATE OF WISCONSIN**  
**Division of Hearings and Appeals**

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In the Matter of

Office of the Inspector General, Petitioner

vs.

DECISION

Case #: FOF - 153867

██████████, Respondent

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Pursuant to petition filed December 4, 2013, under 7 C.F.R. §273.16, to review a decision by the Office of the Inspector General to disqualify ██████████ ██████████ from receiving FoodShare benefits (FS) for one year, a hearing was held on Wednesday, January 29, 2014, by telephone.

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

**PARTIES IN INTEREST:**

Petitioner:

Office of the Inspector General  
Department of Health Services  
PO Box 309  
Madison, WI 53701  
By: Nadine Stankey

Respondent:

██████████ (Did not appear)

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:**

Brian C. Schneider  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The respondent (CARES # ██████████) is a resident of Milwaukee County who received FS benefits in Milwaukee County during the period July 27, 2010 through December 10, 2010.

2. During that period the respondent periodically made FS purchases at Angel Food, a small corner store that since has been disqualified as an FS vendor due to trafficking violations.
3. Angel Food was disqualified for three specific bases that are tied to FS trafficking according to the USDA Food and Nutrition Services (FNS): (1) an unusual number of transactions ending in the same cents value, (2) multiple transactions made by the same purchaser in unusually short time frames, and (3) excessively large purchase transactions. The store's only cash register was through a small opening in a security window and had no price scanner. There were no shopping baskets for customers to place multiple items that would add up to large purchase amounts. The store stocked minimal amounts of groceries, and had an emphasis on snack items.
4. The respondent was listed as homeless in 2010. His purchases at Angel typically were small but occurred often during individual days, like he was "hanging out" at the store (for example, on July 31, 2010, he made six purchases at Angel between 11:48 a.m. and 6:43 p.m. with the smallest \$1.25 and the largest \$6.80). Then, in the early morning of December 9, 2010 he had a purchase of \$99.86. In the early morning the next day, December 10, 2010, he had a purchase of \$99.87. Those two purchases were for his entire December, 2010 FS allotment.
5. On December 19, 2013, the petitioner prepared an Administrative Disqualification Hearing Notice alleging that the respondent trafficked FS.
6. The respondent failed to appear for the scheduled January 29, 2014 Intentional Program Violation (IPV) hearing and did not provide any good cause for said failure to appear.

### DISCUSSION

An intentional program violation of the FoodShare program occurs when a recipient intentionally does the following:

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.

*FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook*, §3.14.1; see also 7 C.F.R. §273.16(c) and Wis. Stat. §§49.795(2-7).

An intentional program violation can be proven by a court order, a diversion agreement entered into with the local district attorney, a waiver of a right to a hearing, or an administrative disqualification hearing, *FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook*, §3.14.1. The petitioner can disqualify only the individual found to have committed the intentional violation; it cannot disqualify the entire household. Those disqualified on grounds involving the improper transfer of FS benefits are ineligible to participate in the FoodShare program for one year for the first violation, two years for the second violation, and permanently for the third violation. Although other family members cannot be disqualified, their monthly allotments will be reduced unless they agree to make restitution within 30 days of the date that the FS program mails a written demand letter. 7 C.F.R. §273.16(b).

7 C.F.R. §273.16(e)(4) provides that the hearing shall proceed if the respondent cannot be located or fails to appear without good cause. The respondent did not appear or claim a good cause reason for not attending the hearing. Therefore, I must determine whether the respondent committed an IPV based solely on the evidence that the petitioner presented at hearing.

In order for the petitioner 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 a program violation per 7 C.F.R. §273.16(e)(6). In *Kuehn v. Kuehn*, 11 Wis.2d 15 (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. ...

*Kuehn*, 11 Wis.2d at 26.

*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., 4<sup>th</sup> 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 opposite is true.

In order to prove the second element, i.e., intention, there must be clear and convincing evidence that the FS recipient intended to commit the IPV. The question of intent is generally one to be determined by the trier of fact. *State v. Lossman*, 118 Wis.2d 526 (1984). 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). Thus, there must be clear and convincing evidence that the FS recipient knew that the act or omission was a violation of the FS Program but committed the violation anyway.

This is not a clear cut situation because there is no first hand evidence that the respondent engaged in trafficking, i.e. no witnesses saw her do so and neither she nor the Angel Food storekeeper admitted to the charges (at least entirely; the storekeeper’s version changed over time). However, it is inferred that the FNS did substantial research on trafficking activity and actions associated with trafficking. Angel Food was disqualified as an FS vendor for taking part in trafficking activities. While most of the respondent’s purchases could be explained innocently, the two big purchases that essentially ate up his entire card balance in December, 2010 are not. There is no possible explanation why a homeless person would utilize \$200 in FS in the early morning hours on two consecutive days unless it was for illicit purchases or even cash. Given that the store was found to have



The appeal must also be served on the other “PARTIES IN INTEREST” named in this decision. The process for appeals to the Circuit Court is in Wis. Stat. §§ 227.52 and 225.53.

Given under my hand at the City of Madison,  
Wisconsin, this 10th day of February, 2014

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\sBrian C. Schneider  
Administrative Law Judge  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

- c: Office of the Inspector General - email
- Public Assistance Collection Unit - email
- Division of Health Care Access and Accountability - email



**State of Wisconsin\DIVISION OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS**

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The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on February 10, 2014.

Office of the Inspector General  
Public Assistance Collection Unit  
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability