



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

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In the Matter of

Waukesha County Health and Human Services, Petitioner

vs.

██████████ Respondent

DECISION

Case #: FOF - 164688

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Pursuant to petition filed March 16, 2015, under Wis. Admin. Code §HA 3.03, and 7 C.F.R. §273.16, to review a decision by the Waukesha County Health and Human Services to disqualify ██████████ ██████████ from receiving FoodShare benefits (FS) one year, a telephonic hearing was held on Tuesday, April 28, 2015 at 09:15 AM.

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

**PARTIES IN INTEREST:**

Petitioner:

Waukesha County Health and Human Services  
514 Riverview Avenue  
Waukesha, WI 53188

Respondent:

██████████  
██████████  
████████████████████

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:**

Kelly Cochrane  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The respondent (CARES # ██████████) is a resident of Milwaukee County who received FS benefits in Waukesha County from at least September 2014 through March 2015.
2. On December 30, 2014 the respondent submitted an Employer Verification of Earnings form (EVFE) to the agency. See Exhibit 5. The EVFE reported that respondent was earning \$8.25/hour and working 24 hours per week. The EVFE contained a signature of ██████████

3. On January 2, 2015 the respondent contacted the agency to see if the EVFE had been received and to report that her wages had gone down. The agency worker then reviewed the State Wage Record and discovered that respondent had wages from the employer going back to June 2014 which had not been reported to the agency by the respondent.
4. On January 3, 2015 the agency requested income verification from the respondent. By January 15, 2015 respondent had not provided the requested verification to the agency, so the agency worker then requested respondent's income verification directly from the employer.
5. On February 11, 2015 the agency received respondent's income verification from the employer. See Exhibit 7. The employer reported that respondent was earning \$15/hour and working approximately 40 hours per week.
6. On February 11, 2015 the agency's worker attempted to contact [REDACTED] by calling the telephone number listed in Exhibit 2. The call was answered by respondent who indicated that [REDACTED] was on vacation.
7. On February 25, 2015 the agency's worker attempted to contact [REDACTED] again by calling the telephone number listed in Exhibit 2. The call went to respondent's voicemail. The agency worker then located another phone number by which to contact the employer.
8. On February 26, 2015 the agency's worker made telephone contact with [REDACTED] and the employer's office manager, [REDACTED]. They verified that respondent was earning \$15/hour and working approximately 40 hours per week. They also stated that they did not recall completing the EVFE and requested that the agency worker forward it to them for review.
9. On February 26, 2015 the agency received a letter from [REDACTED] stating that neither she nor [REDACTED] signed the EVFE for respondent.
10. On March 2, 2015, the petitioner prepared an Administrative Disqualification Hearing Notice alleging that respondent provided inaccurate income verification with a forged signature.
11. The respondent failed to appear for the scheduled April 28, 2015 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. §§ 946.92(2).

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 be a reasonable doubt as to their existence.

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.

Respondent did not appear at the hearing; hence the agency's evidence was uncontradicted. The agency presented evidence showing the EVFE submitted by respondent which underreported her work hours and hourly pay. The employer provided a letter stating that it never completed this EVFE and provided proof of her actual income. The agency's representative also testified that petitioner never reported this income back to June 2014. As her income level was used to determine the amount of her monthly FS allotment, it is clear that respondent received a benefit from underreporting her income. Misstating facts with the intention of receiving or continuing to receive FS benefits and failing to report changes in income are violations of the FS program under Wis. Stat. §§49.795(2) and (2m). Both have occurred here and there is no doubt that a violation of the FS program has occurred.

That respondent intended to commit an IPV is also clear. Respondent did not report the income from this employer back to June, understated her income by providing the falsified EVFE in December, and consistently allowed the agency to continue issuing benefits to her based on the understated income. It would be hard to convince any trier of fact that a wage earner would be unaware of how much money she was earning each pay period. She did nothing to correct this information and produced a falsified EVFE. The agency correctly found that respondent had committed an IPV and was justified in imposing its sanction.

Based upon the record before me, I find that the petitioner has established by clear and convincing evidence that the respondent intentionally violated FS program rules, and that this violation was the first such violation committed by the respondent. Therefore, the petitioner correctly seeks to disqualify the respondent from the FS program for one year.

#### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

1. The respondent violated, and intended to violate, the FS program rules specifying that misstating facts with the intention of receiving or continuing to receive FS benefits and failing to report changes in income are intentional program violations.
2. The violations specified in Conclusion of Law No. 1 are the first such violations committed by the respondent.

**NOW, THEREFORE, it is ORDERED**

That the petitioner's determination is sustained, and that the petitioner may make a finding that the respondent committed a first IPV of the FoodShare program and disqualify the respondent from the program for one year, effective the first month following the date of receipt of this decision.

#### **REQUEST FOR A REHEARING ON GROUNDS OF GOOD CAUSE FOR FAILURE TO APPEAR**

In instances where the good cause for failure to appear is based upon a showing of non-receipt of the hearing notice, the respondent has 30 days after the date of the written notice of the hearing decision to claim good cause for failure to appear. See 7 C.F.R. sec. 273.16(e)(4). Such a claim should be made in writing to the Division of Hearings and Appeals, P.O. Box 7875, Madison, WI 53707-7875.

#### **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, Madison, WI 53703, **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 request (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 28th day of May, 2015

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\sKelly Cochrane  
Administrative Law Judge  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

- c: Moraine Lakes Consortium - email
- Public Assistance Collection Unit - email
- Division of Health Care Access and Accountability - email
- Kathy Jones - email



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

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The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on May 28, 2015.

Waukesha County Health and Human Services  
Public Assistance Collection Unit  
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability  
[kjones@waukeshacounty.gov](mailto:kjones@waukeshacounty.gov)