



STATE OF WISCONSIN
Division of Hearings and Appeals

In the Matter of

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
Redact

DECISION

FOO/166130

PRELIMINARY RECITALS

Pursuant to a petition filed May 18, 2015, under Wis. Admin. Code, §HA 3.03(1), to review a decision by Milwaukee Enrollment Services to reduce FoodShare benefits (FS), a hearing was held on June 9, 2015, by telephone.

The issue for determination is whether the agency correctly determined petitioner's FS due to a change in in Department policy.

PARTIES IN INTEREST:

Petitioner:

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
Redact

Respondent:

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

By: [Redacted]
Milwaukee Enrollment Services
1220 W. Vliet Street
Milwaukee, WI 53205

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:

Brian C. Schneider
Division of Hearings and Appeals

FINDINGS OF FACT

- 1. Petitioner (CARES # [Redacted]) is a resident of Milwaukee County.
2. Petitioner receives FS for a one-person household. He completed a renewal on May 4, 2015. He reported income of \$772 monthly social security, from which \$43 is deducted for back child support. He pays \$222 per month rent with utilities included. He pays for a telephone.
3. By a notice dated May 5, 2015, the agency informed petitioner that FS would decrease from \$134 to \$21, effective June 1, 2015.

4. The Department changed its policy toward counting shelter expenses in the FS determination. Previously all FS households received a \$450 utility expense. The policy changed to provide that only expenses actually paid by the household can be counted. Petitioner received only a \$30 telephone expense. He did not receive energy assistance in the past year.

DISCUSSION

In determining the amount of FS to be issued each month, the county must budget all of the recipient's nonexempt income. 7 C.F.R. §273.9(b). From that income, certain deductions are allowed. The deductions include a standard deduction, which currently is \$155 per month. 7 C.F.R. §273.9(d)(1); FS Handbook, Appendix 4.6.2. Another deduction is the earned income deduction, which equals 20% of the household's total earned income. 7 C.F.R. §273.9(d)(2); FS Handbook, App. 4.6.3. A third possible deduction is for medical expenses exceeding \$35 in a month for elderly or disabled persons. 7 C.F.R. §273.9(d)(3); FS Handbook, App. 4.6.4. A fourth deduction is for child/dependent care. 7 C.F.R. §273.9(d)(4); FS Handbook, App. 4.6.6. The final deduction is for shelter expenses; the deduction is equal to the excess expense above 50% of net income remaining after other deductions. 7 C.F.R. §273.9(d)(5); FS Handbook, App. 4.6.7.

In May, 2015, petitioner's shelter deduction was \$377 resulting from rent of \$218 and a utility expense of \$450. For June he received no shelter deduction because his rent was \$222 and his utility expense was just \$30 for his telephone. The \$252 shelter expense was less than one-half of petitioner's income. I note that petitioner received a \$43 deduction in the FS calculation for his child support payment.

Prior to the federal 2014 Farm Bill the Wisconsin Department of Administration issued an annual energy assistance payment of \$1 to all FS households who were not already receiving energy assistance. This policy allowed Wisconsin to grant all FS households the Heating Standard Utility Allowance of \$450. Actual utility usage did not matter.

The 2014 Farm Bill changed this practice. The 2014 Farm Bill requires a household to have received an energy assistance payment of greater than \$20 to receive the \$450 utility standard. 7 U.S.C. 2014(e)(6)(C)(ii)(I). Therefore households that do not receive energy assistance receive the utility standard based on the utility obligation actually incurred by the household. The change is implemented at the FS recipient's first renewal following the change in law. Petitioner did not receive energy assistance and his only monthly utility obligation is his phone.

I must conclude that the agency correctly reduced petitioner's FS. The change was due to a change in policy that was forced by federal FS law. Petitioner testified that the reduction has left him in a difficult financial situation. However, the Division of Hearings and Appeals does not have authority to order a higher FS amount than the amount calculated by the FS rules.

Petitioner testified that he has to follow a specific diet because of his medical conditions. However, FS rules provide that special dietary needs cannot be considered in determining the amount of FS to be issued. 7 C.F.R. §273.9(d)(3).

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The agency correctly reduced petitioner's FS due to a reduction in his shelter expense.

THEREFORE, it is

ORDERED

That the petition for review herein be and the same is hereby dismissed.

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, Madison, Wisconsin 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 (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 Madison,
Wisconsin, this 11th day of June, 2015

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



State of Wisconsin \DIVISION OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS

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The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on June 11, 2015.

Milwaukee Enrollment Services
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability