



STATE OF WISCONSIN
Division of Hearings and Appeals

In the Matter of

Milwaukee Enrollment Services, Petitioner

vs.

██████████, Respondent

DECISION

Case #: FOF - 167355

Pursuant to petition filed July 17, 2015, under Wis. Admin. Code §HA 3.03, and 7 C.F.R. §273.16, to review a decision by the Milwaukee Enrollment Services to disqualify ██████████ from receiving FoodShare benefits (FS) one year, a telephonic hearing was held on Thursday, September 3, 2015 at 09:30 AM.

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

There appeared at that time the following persons:

PARTIES IN INTEREST:

Petitioner:

Milwaukee Enrollment Services
1220 W Vliet St
Milwaukee, WI 53205
By: Pamela Hazley, HSPC Sr.

Respondent:

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

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:

Kelly Cochrane
Division of Hearings and Appeals

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The respondent (CARES # ██████████) is a resident of Iowa who received FS benefits in Milwaukee County from approximately January 1, 2013 through April 30, 2015. See Exhibit 2.
2. Respondent was employed with ██████████ from 6/17/13 –10/25/13. The employer listed respondent's address as being in Iowa. See Exhibit 4.

3. Respondent was employed with [REDACTED] from 12/14/13 – 12/27/13. The employer listed respondent’s address as being in Iowa. See Exhibit 5.
4. Respondent was employed with [REDACTED] from 8/27/14 – 9/13/14. The employer listed respondent’s address as being in Iowa. *Id.*
5. The Wisconsin child support payment system (KIDS) listed respondent’s address as being in Iowa between March 2013 and October 2014. See Exhibit 6.
6. On December 26, 2013, June 12, 2014, and December 15, 2014 respondent reported to the agency that he was a Wisconsin resident, was homeless, and had no income in his household. See Exhibit 7, 8 and 9.
7. On May 3, 2014 respondent reported [REDACTED] in Milwaukee as his mailing address. See Exhibit 3, 8 and 9.
8. On March 26, 2015 the agency issued a request for verification of wages to the respondent. See Exhibit 10. When the agency did not receive the requested verification, it closed respondent’s FS case. See Exhibit 11.
9. On July 21, 2015, the petitioner prepared an Administrative Disqualification Hearing Notice alleging that respondent concealed circumstances which, if made known to the agency, would have resulted in a discontinuance of FS benefits, specifically a “failure to report correct residence”.
10. The respondent failed to appear for the scheduled September 3, 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., 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 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.

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. The FS regulations provide that FS recipients must live in the state in which they apply for benefits. 7 C.F.R. §273.3(a). I find that the respondent misrepresented where he was living in order to receive FS in Wisconsin as shown by his Iowa address, which was confirmed by three employers from 6/17/13 – 10/25/13, 12/14/13 – 12/27/13, and 8/27/14 – 9/13/14. He also failed to report his employment with these employers. The Iowa address was additionally confirmed by KIDS from March 2013-October 2014. See Exhibit

15. The petitioner testified that respondent's FS usage also occurred mostly in Iowa between January 2013-June 2015, with other usage taking place in North Carolina. Case Comments shows he knew how to contact the agency when he needed to, and he was advised of, and agreed to abide by, FS rules with each application or renewal. See Exhibits 3, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 13. He continuously affirmatively reported his living arrangement as homeless in Wisconsin with no income at least on December 26, 2013, June 12, 2014, and December 15, 2014 and affirmatively reported a Milwaukee PO Box in May 2014. See Exhibit 3, 7, 8 and 9.

The respondent has not responded to those allegations either by way of this hearing or in response to letters that the agency mailed to him advising him of the allegations. I will take his lack of response or appearance as an admission of the allegations and find that the petitioner has met its burden of proof with the evidence it has presented that the intentional program violation occurred.

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 rule specifying that an intentional program violation of the FoodShare program occurs when a recipient intentionally makes a false or misleading statement, or misrepresents, conceals or withholds facts.
2. The violation specified in Conclusion of Law No. 1 is the first such violation 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 16th day of September, 2015

\sKelly Cochrane
Administrative Law Judge
Division of Hearings and Appeals

- c: Miles - email
- Public Assistance Collection Unit - email
- Division of Health Care Access and Accountability - email
- Pamela Hazley - email



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The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on September 16, 2015.

Milwaukee Enrollment Services
Public Assistance Collection Unit
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability
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