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

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In the Matter of

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

DECISION

FOO/168615

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**PRELIMINARY RECITALS**

Pursuant to a petition filed September 08, 2015, under Wis. Admin. Code § HA 3.03(1), to review a decision by the Racine County Department of Human Services in regard to FoodShare benefits (FS), a telephonic hearing was held on October 22, 2015.

The issue for determination is whether the agency correctly reduced petitioner's FS effective September 1, 2015.

There appeared at that time and place the following persons:

**PARTIES IN INTEREST:**

Petitioner:

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Respondent:

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

By: Madeline Rice, ESS Lead

Racine County Department of Human Services  
1717 Taylor Ave  
Racine, WI 53403-2497

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:**

Kelly Cochrane  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

### FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Petitioner is a resident of Racine County and has been a recipient of FS.
2. In August 2015 petitioner had a review for FS. Petitioner's gross monthly income was determined to be \$884.75. She pays a monthly rent of \$400 that includes utilities, except that she does pay separately for a phone expense.
3. On September 1, 2015 the agency issued a notice to petitioner stating that effective September 1, 2015 her FS would decrease to \$16.

### DISCUSSION

FS benefits are calculated pursuant to 7 C.F.R. §273.9. The maximum FS allotment amounts, based on household size, are listed at *FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook*, §8.1.2. The *FS Handbook* can be viewed online at <http://www.emhandbooks.wisconsin.gov/fsh/fsh.htm>.

In calculating the petitioner's allotment, the agency must follow the procedure set by the federal FS regulations, which is restated in the *FS Handbook*. In determining the amount of FS to be issued each month, the agency must budget all income of the FS household, including all earned and unearned income. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9(b). From the gross household income, the following permissible deductions as discussed in the *FoodShare Handbook*, §4.6.1 are allowed: a standard deduction, an earned income deduction, a medical expenses deduction, a child support payment deduction, a dependent care expense deduction, and a shelter expense deduction. Some FS groups are not allowed a deduction for some expenses and some expenses are not always deducted in full. Petitioner received the standard deduction, the earned income deduction and the shelter expense deduction. See Exhibit 4. She did not receive any medical expense deduction as none was reported at her renewal.

Petitioner's concern at hearing was the decrease in FS to \$16. The reason the FS decreased was due to a mass change in policy regarding utility deductions. The policy in question relates to Operations Memo #14-16, available online at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dhcaa/memos/14-16amended2.pdf>. As noted in the policy, this change in policy was to take place for FS renewals processed on or after April 28, 2014 as it did here. Of particular relevance here, it states, "Households that have not received WHEAP will receive the appropriate utility standard based on the utility obligation(s) incurred by the household at the food unit's current residence...The Phone Utility Allowance (PUA), if obligated to pay, or actually paying for only a telephone, including cellular phones." *Id.* Because petitioner is only paying for the phone utility, she gets the PUA, which is \$30. *Id.* She was previously receiving a higher utility deduction under the old policy, which allowed her to receive a higher FS allotment in the past.

The agency presented the budget screens to show how it determined petitioner's FS for September. I have reviewed the information and find no errors in the computations. Petitioner did not dispute them at hearing either.

I remind the petitioner that if her income decreases, has medical expenses, her rent increases, or has other changes to her household, she must report and verify that to the agency so her FS can be redetermined.

I add, assuming petitioner feels that this is not a fair determination, that I do not have equitable powers and cannot deviate from what law and policy dictate. See Oneida County v. Converse, 180 Wis.2d 120, 125, 508 N.W.2d 416 (1993). In other words, I cannot change the outcome here because it would be fair.

### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The agency correctly reduced petitioner's FS effective September 1, 2015.

**THEREFORE, it is**

**ORDERED**

The petition for review herein is 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 Milwaukee,  
Wisconsin, this 2nd day of November, 2015

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\sKelly Cochrane  
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 November 2, 2015.

Racine County Department of Human Services  
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability