



## State of New Jersey

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DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT  
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TRENTON, NJ 08625-0716

NATASHA JOHNSON  
*Assistant Commissioner*

The following Decision is distributed for your information. This Decision has been made in consideration of the specific facts of this case. This Decision is not to be interpreted as establishing any new mandatory policy or procedure otherwise officially promulgated.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

### FINAL DECISION

OAL DKT. NO. HPW **10904-24 A.H.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **S643879012 (MIDDLESEX COUNTY BD. OF SOC. SVCS.)**

Petitioners ("A.H.") and ("M.A.") appeal from the Respondent Agency's sanctioning of their Work First New Jersey/ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families ("WFNJ/TANF") benefits. The Agency sanctioned Petitioners' WFNJ/TANF benefits, contending that they failed to comply with the mandatory WFNJ work activity. Because Petitioners appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On September 3, 2024, the Honorable Judith Lieberman, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents.

On September 20, 2024, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determination. Here, the ALJ in this matter issued a very thorough and comprehensive Initial Decision, outlining the procedural history, providing a detailed factual timeline, and rendering a well thought out analysis, applying law to fact. See Initial Decision at 2-12. Specifically, the ALJ found that Petitioners were required to comply with the WFNJ work activity Monday through Friday, from 9:00 am to 4:30 p.m., beginning April 1, 2024, through April 26, 2024, and that Petitioners had executed Individual Responsibility Plans ("IRPs") wherein they agreed to participate in said activity, and understood the consequences for failing to participate. See Initial Decision at 3-4; see also Exhibit R-1, and N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.1, -4.2, and -4.8. The ALJ also found that Petitioners had failed to attend said required scheduled work activity, without an authorized regulatory deferment, and/or without good cause. See Initial Decision at 4-5; see also Exhibit R-2, and N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.10, -4.11. Further, the ALJ opined that "while it appears that A.H. and M.A.'s enrollment in graduate school, which puts them on course to obtain gainful employment, should satisfy the WFNJ work requirement, the [WFNJ] regulations do not support this conclusion." See Initial Decision at 5-12; see also Exhibits R-3, R-7, and N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.2(g), -4.3(k), and Division of Family Development Instruction ("DFDI") No. 24-03-04. Based on the foregoing, the ALJ concluded that the Agency's sanctioning of Petitioners' WFNJ/TANF benefits, for failure to comply with their required WFNJ work activity, was proper and must stand. See Initial Decision at 12; see also Exhibits R-4, R-5, and N.J.A.C. 10:90-4.13. I agree.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received.

As Assistant Commissioner, DFD, Department of Human Services, I have considered the ALJ's Initial Decision, and following an independent review of the record, I concur with the ALJ's final conclusion in this matter and hereby ADOPT the Findings of Fact and Conclusion of Law.

Accordingly, the Initial Decision is hereby ADOPTED, and the Agency's determination is AFFIRMED.



Officially approved final version. November 14, 2024

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Natasha Johnson  
Assistant Commissioner

