



State of New Jersey

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
PO BOX 716

SARAH ADELMAN
Commissioner

TAHESHA L. WAY
Lt. Governor

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 **13719-25 D.H.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C257975004 (CAMDEN-CCBSS)**

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's denial of Emergency Assistance ("EA") benefits. The Agency denied Petitioner's EA benefits, and imposed a six-month period of EA benefits ineligibility, contending that she abandoned affordable housing, thereby causing her own homelessness. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On August 12, 2025 the Honorable Rebecca C. Lafferty, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On August 13, 2025, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determinations.

Here, the record reflects that Petitioner entered into a lease on March 22, 2024, and during January or February of 2025, received a Notice to Quit/Terminate Lease Agreement from her landlord with a termination date of February 28, 2025. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1 at 2. On March 19, 2025, Petitioner and her landlord executed a Mutual Agreement to Terminate Lease effective April 30, 2025, in order to allow Petitioner to preserve her voucher for affordable housing. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1 at 3. Petitioner vacated the residence, as agreed upon, on April 30, 2025. See Initial Decision at 2. On July 18, 2025, Petitioner applied for EA benefits in order to pay a security deposit for a new rental residence. See Initial Decision at 3. Upon review of her application, the Agency determined that Petitioner had abandoned her affordable housing and issued a denial on August 4, 2025. *Ibid.*; see also Exhibit R-1 at 7-14. At the time of the hearing, Petitioner testified that her prior landlord terminated her lease for uncited breaches of the lease agreement, and that her lease was simply "not renewed," contending that she signed the Mutual Agreement to Terminate Lease in order to preserve her housing voucher. See Initial Decision at 4-5; see also Exhibits P-2, P-3, and P-4. Based on the foregoing, the ALJ found that Petitioner had caused her own homelessness by voluntarily abandoning affordable housing, by signing the Mutual Agreement to Terminate Lease and vacating the property, and concluded that the Agency's denial of EA benefits, and the imposition of a mandatory six-month EA ineligibility period, were proper and must stand. See Initial Decision at 5; see also N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.1(c)(3)(iv), -6.1(c)(3)(vii). I agree.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received.

As Assistant Commissioner, Division of Family Development, 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.

By way of comment, Petitioner's EA ineligibility penalty shall run from July 18, 2025, through January 18, 2026. See Exhibit R-1 at 10.



By way of further comment, the Agency shall refer Petitioner to any and all agencies and organizations that may be able to assist with her current needs, including Social Services for the Homeless.

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

Officially approved final version. August 19, 2025

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

