



State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
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SARAH ADELMAN
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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 **04416-25 M.L.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C192698009 (HUDSON COUNTY DEPT OF FAM SVCS)**

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's denial of Emergency Assistance ("EA") benefits, and the imposition of a six-month period of ineligibility for EA benefits. The Agency denied Petitioner EA benefits, and imposed a six-month EA ineligibility penalty, contending that she had abandoned employment and affordable housing in Florida ("FL"), and moved to New Jersey ("NJ") without a plan for permanent housing, thereby causing her own homelessness. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On March 13, 2025, the Honorable Andrew M. Baron, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. The record closed on March 17, 2025.

On March 18, 2025, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determination. Here, the ALJ found that Petitioner had abandoned her employment, and permanent housing in FL, and had moved first to Massachusetts, and then to NJ without a plan for employment or permanent housing. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibits P-1, R-1 at 17-69. Further, the ALJ found that Petitioner's homelessness was not due to circumstances beyond her control as she could have stayed in FL, but instead she first chose to move to Massachusetts where employment was speculative and did not exist, and with a plan to temporarily reside with her brother, which plan subsequently fell through. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit P-1, R-1 at 8-13, 71. Moreover, the record reflects that Petitioner admitted that she had moved to NJ because she had heard that NJ "won't turn people away who are in her position." See Initial Decision at 2. Based on the foregoing, the ALJ concluded that Petitioner had caused her own homelessness, without good cause, and as such, the Agency's denial of EA benefits to Petitioner, and its imposition of a six-month EA ineligibility penalty, were proper and must stand. *Id.* at 3-5; see also Exhibit R-1 at 1-7, and N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.1(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, 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.

March 26, 2025

Natasha Johnson

Assistant Commissioner

