



## State of New Jersey

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DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT  
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TRENTON, NJ 08625-0716

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*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 02955-25 R.G.

AGENCY DKT. NO. S574846009 (HUDSON COUNTY DEPT OF FAM SVCS)

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's denial of her Work First New Jersey/General Assistance ("WFNJ/GA") benefits application. The Agency denied WFNJ/GA benefits to Petitioner, contending that she had failed to sign an Agreement to Repay, which made her application incomplete. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On March 19, 2025, the Honorable Nanci G. Stokes, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On March 31, 2025, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, reversing the Agency's determination.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received.

As Assistant Commissioner, Division of Family Development ("DFD"), Department of Human Services, I have reviewed the ALJ's Initial Decision and the record, and I hereby MODIFY the ALJ's Initial Decision, and REVERSE the Agency's determinations, based on the discussion below.

Here, on October 4, 2024, Petitioner applied for WFNJ/GA benefits, after having lost her employment and the cessation of her unemployment benefits during September, 2024. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1. On October 22, 2024, Petitioner was interviewed by the Agency and sent a Request for Verification seeking documentation necessary to determine her eligibility for WFNJ/GA benefits, as well as her signature on required forms, all of which were due by November 4, 2024. Ibid. Petitioner returned the documentation and forms to the Agency on October 31, 2024, and followed up with the Agency several weeks later regarding her application status. See Initial Decision at 3. The Agency informed Petitioner that her application was still pending. Ibid. On November 21, 2024, the Agency denied Petitioner's application solely because she failed to sign an agreement to repay that was included in the paperwork that had been provided to her. Ibid. The Agency never reached out to Petitioner regarding the unsigned document. Ibid. Petitioner went to the Agency on December 3, 2024, having not received the denial notice, immediately reapplied, signed all necessary forms, and was approved for WFNJ/GA benefits on December 3, 2024. Ibid. The ALJ found that the WFNJ/GA benefits issue before the court was whether Petitioner was due a retroactive WFNJ/GA benefits payment for any period of time between the submission of her October, 2024 application and the approval for benefits on December 3, 2024. See Initial Decision at 4-5; see also N.J.A.C. 10:90-2.2(a)(5). The ALJ found that the Agency failed to make an eligibility determination regarding Petitioner's application within thirty days, and that the Agency should have advised Petitioner as to the unsigned form, as she met all other eligibility requirements for benefits. See Initial Decision at 4-5; see also N.J.A.C. 10:90-1.4(a). Based on the foregoing, and taking into consideration the Agency's delay in processing Petitioner's WFNJ/GA application, the ALJ found that the Petitioner should receive retroactive WFNJ/GA benefits from November 4, 2024, thirty-days from the date of her application, to December 3, 2024, when Petitioner submitted a new application and was



approved for WFNJ/GA benefits by the Agency. See Initial Decision at 5. I agree, but the Initial Decision is modified to reflect that, as Petitioner had submitted all of the other required documentation timely, she is eligible to receive retroactive benefits to the date of her original application, October 4, 2024. See N.J.A.C. 10:90-1.2(f)(8).

Accordingly, the Initial Decision is hereby MODIFIED, and the Agency's determination is REVERSED.

Officially approved final version. May 21, 2025

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Natasha Johnson  
Assistant Commissioner

