



State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
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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 **11412-24 R.J.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **S813649009 (HUDSON COUNTY DEPT OF FAM SVCS)**

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's denial of Work First New Jersey/General Assistance ("WFNJ/GA"), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP") benefits. The Agency denied Petitioner's applications for WFNJ/GA and SNAP benefits for failure to provide information and documentation necessary to determine eligibility. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law ("OAL") for a hearing. On December 10, 2024, the Honorable Ernest M. Bongiovanni, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents.

On January 15, 2025, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determinations. Here, the record reflects that Petitioner applied online, once for WFNJ/GA and again for WFNJ/GA and SNAP, both during August 2024. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibits R-2, R-3. When completing the applications, Petitioner failed to include her address, phone number, and email, with all of those fields remaining blank upon submission. Ibid. The Agency representative testified, and the Notice of Denial indicated, that the Agency was unable to locate Petitioner, due to the lack of information contained on her applications. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibit R-1. Although Petitioner testified that she had provided all of the information requested on the applications, the ALJ found that she had failed to provide the Agency with the basic, essential information needed to determine her WFNJ/GA and SNAP benefits eligibility, and moreover, the Agency was unable to communicate with Petitioner regarding the missing information. See Initial Decision at 2. Further, the ALJ found that Petitioner failed to give any good cause reason for failing to provide such information, continually stating that "I provided everything." Id. at 3. Petitioner currently resides in a rehabilitation facility and when she was questioned as to where she intends to reside following her release, she was unable to provide a location but testified she did not wish to return to Hudson County. Ibid. Although Petitioner is paraplegic and deaf, she testified that she had been denied Social Security disability benefits, and was not receiving any disability assistance. Id. at 3. Of note, an interpreter for the deaf was unable to be secured for the hearing, but nevertheless, Petitioner chose to proceed with the hearing without an interpreter. Id. at 2 fn 1. The Agency representative also noted that the rehabilitation facility providing all of Petitioner's meals would make her ineligible for receipt of SNAP benefits. See N.J.A.C. 10:87-2.2(b) (generally, individuals who are residents of an institution or group home are ineligible to participate in the SNAP benefits program). Id. at 3.

Based on the foregoing, the ALJ concluded that the Agency's denial of Petitioner's WFNJ/GA and SNAP benefits applications was proper and must stand. See Initial Decision at 3-4; see also N.J.A.C. 10:87-2.14, -2.19, -2.22, -2.27; N.J.A.C. 10:90-1.6, -2.2. I agree.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received.



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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 is without prejudice to reapply for WFNJ/GA and SNAP benefits, if she has not already done so, but is advised that she must provide all information and documentation necessary to determine eligibility. Petitioner is advised to communicate directly with the Agency with regards to the applications and any required documentation.

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

Officially approved final version. February 05, 2025

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

