



State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
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Commissioner

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Lt. Governor

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 **07872-25 C.R.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C050803019 (SUSSEX COUNTY DIVISION OF SOC. 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 Affidavit of Cooperation, related to child support, which made her application incomplete. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On June 30, 2025, the Honorable Leslie Z. Celentano, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On July 18, 2025, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, reversing the Agency's determination.

Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received by this office from the Agency on July 30, 2025.

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 ADOPT the ALJ's Initial Decision, and REVERSE the Agency's determinations, based on the discussion below.

Here, on February 25, 2025, Petitioner applied for WFNJ/GA benefits, as she has been unemployed since June, 2024. See Initial Decision at 2. On March 10, 2025, Petitioner completed her interview with the Agency and was sent a Request for Verification seeking documentation necessary to determine her eligibility for WFNJ/GA benefits, as well as her signature on all required forms. Ibid. Petitioner testified that she returned all of the paperwork to the Agency. Ibid. On March 27, 2025, the Agency denied Petitioner's application, solely because she failed to sign an Affidavit of Cooperation, related to cooperation with child support, that the Agency asserted was included in the paperwork that had been provided to her for completion. Ibid. The Agency never reached out to Petitioner regarding the unsigned document prior to issuing the denial. See Initial Decision at 2-3.

The ALJ found Petitioner's testimony credible that the Affidavit of Cooperation was not included in the paperwork sent to her for signature, and that, due to Petitioner being fifty-six years of age, and her child being twenty-seven years of age, the contention that Petitioner had declined to sign the required document was "absurd." See Initial Decision at 4. Based on the foregoing, the ALJ found that the Agency had failed to assist the applicant in resolving the issue leading to the denial of her application, and that the Agency put forth no other grounds for ineligibility beyond the missing signed Affidavit of Cooperation. See Initial Decision at 6; see also N.J.A.C. 10:90-1.6(a)(2)(a). Accordingly, the ALJ concluded that Petitioner is due retroactive WFNJ/GA benefits from the date of her application on February 25, 2025. See Initial Decision at 6; see also N.J.A.C. 10:90-1.2(f)(8). I agree and direct that the Agency expedite the issuance of the retroactive benefits.



By way of comment, I have reviewed the Agency's submitted Exceptions, and I find that the arguments therein do not alter my decision in this matter.

Accordingly, the Initial Decision is hereby ADOPTED, and the Agency's determination is REVERSED, as outlined above.

Officially approved final version. August 05, 2025

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

