



State of New Jersey

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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 **09418-25 D.W.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C060703006 (CUMBERLAND COUNTY BD OF SOC SVCS.)**

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's termination of Work First New Jersey/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families ("WFNJ/TANF") benefits. The Agency terminated Petitioner's WFNJ/TANF benefits, contending that she failed to cooperate with child support requirements. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On July 16, 2025, the Honorable William T. Cooper III, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a telephonic plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On August 6, 2025, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming 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 ADOPT the ALJ's Initial Decision, and AFFIRM the Agency's determination, based on the discussion below.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 10:90-16.2, the first step in the application process for WFNJ/TANF eligibility, is cooperation with the child support requirements set out in N.J.A.C. 10:90-16.3, and the good faith effort requirement set out in N.J.A.C. 10:90-16.4. WFNJ/TANF applicants and recipients are required to make a good faith effort to identify the non-custodial parent and failing to make such effort shall make an applicant/recipient ineligible for WFNJ benefits. See N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.4(d).

Here, the record reveals that Petitioner, in fulfilling her obligation to the Agency regarding cooperation with child support, identified an individual, W.S., as the father of her minor child and thereafter the Agency initiated child support proceedings. See Initial Decision at 2. The child support proceeding resulted in genetic testing being performed, which excluded W.S. as the child's father. *Ibid.*; see also Exhibit R-1 at 11. The Agency informed Petitioner of the genetic testing results, at which time Petitioner identified a second individual, C.B., as the father of her minor child and thereafter, the Agency initiated additional child support proceedings. See Initial Decision at 2-3. C.B. was uncooperative with the child support proceedings, which led to the entering of a default order against him and, subsequent to the default order of support being entered, C.B. filed with the Superior Court to disestablish paternity. See Initial Decision at 3. The child support proceeding resulted in genetic testing being performed, which excluded C.B. as the child's father. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibit R-1 at 19, 24-25. On March 31, 2025, the Agency notified Petitioner of an appointment on April 10, 2025 to discuss the paternity issue. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibit R-1 at 28. On April 8, 2025, Petitioner brought a hand-written statement to the Agency, alleging that an employee of the child support unit had provided W.S. with information regarding the child support proceeding, which allowed him to have another individual appear for his genetic testing appointment. See Initial Decision at 3. On April 8, 2025, the Agency notified Petitioner



of an appointment on April 14, 2025, to discuss the paternity issue and indicated within the notice that her failure to appear would result in the termination of cash assistance benefits. Ibid.; see also Exhibit R-1 at 29. On April 14, 2025, Petitioner failed to appear at the Agency. See Initial Decision at 3. On April 21, 2025, the Agency notified Petitioner she was no longer eligible for WFNJ/TANF benefits, effective May 1, 2025, due to her non-cooperation. Ibid. At the time of the hearing, Petitioner testified that W.S. was the father of her child, that she did not trust the child support unit, and that she would no longer cooperate with the child support unit. Ibid.; see also N.J.A.C 10:90-6.4(d).

Based on the foregoing, the ALJ found that Petitioner failed to appear for her appointment with the Agency on April 14, 2025, which failure to cooperate led to the termination of her WFNJ/TANF benefits effective May 1, 2025. See Initial Decision at 4. Further, the ALJ found that Petitioner's unsupported allegations regarding the child support unit do not justify her non-cooperation with regulatory authority and, as such, the Agency's termination of Petitioner's WFNJ/TANF was proper. Ibid. I agree.

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

Officially approved final version. September 19, 2025

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

