State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
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STEPHEN CHA, MD, MHSR
Commissioner

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 **06405-26 L.W.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **S573542012** (**MIDDLESEX COUNTY BD. OF SOC. SVCS.**)

?Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's termination of Emergency Assistance ("EA") benefits, and the imposition of a six-month period of ineligibility for EA benefits. The Agency terminated Petitioner's EA benefits, and imposed a six-month EA ineligibility penalty, contending that he failed to comply with his EA service plan ("SP"). Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On August 4, 2026, the Honorable Sarah G. Crowley, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a telephonic plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On August 18, 2026, 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, Department of Human Services, I have considered the ALJ's Initial Decision, and following an independent review of the record, I hereby ADOPT the Initial Decision and AFFIRM the Agency's determination, based on the discussion below.

The purpose of EA is to meet the emergent needs of public assistance recipients, such as imminent homelessness, so that the recipient can participate in work activities without disruption and continue on a path to self-sufficiency. See N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.1(a). In order to maintain eligibility for EA benefits, the recipient must take reasonable steps to resolve his or her emergent situation. See N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.6(a). Reasonable steps include, but are not limited to, the EA benefits recipient participating in the development of, and complying with, a written and signed SP. Ibid.

Here, the ALJ found, and the record substantiates, that Petitioner executed an EA SP on December 3, 2025, wherein he agreed, among other things, to submit proof of weekly housing searches. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-2, and N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.6(a). Also on December 3, 2025, and again on March 17, 2026, Petitioner executed an EA Verification List, wherein he agreed, among other things, to submit proof of weekly housing searches. See Exhibits R-3, R-9. On March 17, 2026, the Agency notified Petitioner his EA benefits would terminate, effective April 17, 2026, for failure to comply with his SP, and imposed a six-month period of ineligibility for receipt of EA benefits. See Initial Decision at 2.

The ALJ found that Petitioner had not submitted any housing searches or rental options to the Agency since December, 2025, with the exception of May, 2026 searches, which were submitted subsequent to the issuance of the benefits termination notification in this matter. See Initial Decision at 2-3. Based on the facts presented, the ALJ concluded that the Agency's termination of Petitioner's EA benefits, and the imposition of a six-month EA ineligibility penalty, were proper and must stand. See Initial Decision at 3. I agree.

By way of comment, as Petitioner has received continued assistance pending the outcome of this hearing, Petitioner's six-month EA ineligibility penalty shall begin as of the date of issuance of this Final Agency Decision.

By way of further comment, the Agency shall refer Petitioner to any and all agencies and organizations that may be able to assist with his current needs, including Social Services for the Homeless.

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

Officially approved final version. October 01, 2026

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner