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 **07599-26 P.T.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C052619012** (**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 14, 2026, the Honorable Judith Lieberman, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a telephonic plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On September 1, 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 SPs on November 12, 2025, and on February 27, 2026, wherein he agreed, among other things, to submit proof of weekly housing searches. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibits R-2, R-3, and N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.6(a). The February 27, 2026, SP also included language that he was to submit overdue housing search logs from November, 2025 until the current date, as Petitioner had failed to submit logs from the date of his initial SP. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibit R-3. Petitioner submitted only one housing search log to the Agency, for the period of March 2, 2026 through March 6, 2026. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibit R-4. On April 20, 2026, the Agency notified Petitioner his EA benefits would terminate, effective May 20, 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 3; see also Exhibit R-5. Prior to the effective date of benefits termination, on May 12, 2026, Petitioner submitted housing search logs for various dates in November, 2025 and December, 2025, however, no housing logs were produced for January, 2026 through May, 2026. See Initial Decision at 4; see also Exhibit R-8.

At the time of the hearing, Petitioner provided testimony as to his significant physical and mental health issues and indicated that he had not fully understood the housing logs and was unable to use resources such as the internet, or the telephone without his caretaker, to complete such logs. See Initial Decision at 4-5. Petitioner's son also testified at the hearing that, following the hearing, he would submit proof of housing logs provided to the Agency, however, no such submissions were made. Ibid.

Based on the foregoing, the ALJ found that Petitioner had not submitted any housing searches or rental options to the Agency over the course of several months. See Initial Decision at 6-7. 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 7. I agree.

By way of comment, the termination notice in this matter indicated that Petitioner had failed to produce documentation of his compliance with a mental health program, however, Petitioner cured such failure prior to the effective termination date. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibit R-6.

By way of further 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 final 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 07, 2026

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner