



State of New Jersey

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DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
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Commissioner

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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 **09329-26 R.L.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C656806007 (ESSEX COUNTY DIVISION OF WELFARE)**

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's denial of Emergency Assistance ("EA") benefits and the imposition of a six-month period of ineligibility for EA benefits. The Agency denied Petitioner's application for EA benefits, and imposed a six-month EA ineligibility penalty, contending that he caused his own homelessness by refusing to accept an appropriate shelter placement. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law ("OAL") for a hearing. On June 16, 2026, the Honorable Lubna Qazi-Chowdhry, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On July 31, 2026, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determinations.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were filed.

As Assistant Commissioner, Division of Family Development ("DFD"), 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 discussed below.

Pursuant to N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.3(a)(1), the "agency shall determine the most appropriate form of emergency housing which is required to address the need and authorize payment of the costs of adequate emergency shelter/housing, taking into consideration individual/family circumstances and services provided." Such emergency housing may include placement in a shelter. Ibid.

EA benefits shall not be provided for a period of six months when an applicant "has caused his or her own homelessness, without good cause." N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.1(c)(3).

The record in this matter reveals that Petitioner applied for, and was granted, EA benefits on June 2, 2026. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibits R-1, R-2. Petitioner had previously been residing in a shelter (not provided by EA benefits), and had reached the maximum amount of time permitted by the shelter for his stay. See Initial Decision at 2-3. At the time of his EA application, and approval, the Agency offered Petitioner shelter placement, however, Petitioner refused the shelter placement offered, contending that he had previously resided at the shelter and experienced various issues with staff. See Initial Decision at 3. On June 2, 2026, the Agency sent Petitioner a notice denying EA benefits, indicating that Petitioner had refused shelter placement, and imposing a six-month ineligibility period from receipt of EA benefits. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibit R-3.

Based on the foregoing, the ALJ in this matter concluded that the Agency's offer of EA placement was the appropriate form of EA benefits to meet Petitioner's emergent need based on the facts presented, and as such, when Petitioner



refused said placement, the Agency's denial of EA benefits, and the imposition of a mandatory six-month EA ineligibility penalty, were proper and must stand. See Initial Decision at 3-4; see also Exhibit R-3, and N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.3(a)(1) -6.1(c)(3). I agree.

By way of comment, Petitioner's six-month EA ineligibility period shall run from June 2, 2026, the effective date of the Agency's EA benefits denial, through December 2, 2026. See Exhibit R-2.

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

Officially approved final version. September 02, 2026

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

