



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 15505-25 T.E.

AGENCY DKT. NO. **S660048012 (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 she failed to comply with her EA service plan ("SP"). Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On December 16, 2025, the Honorable Tricia M. Caliguire, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a telephonic plenary hearing, took testimony, and admitted documents. On January 5, 2026, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determinations.

No Exceptions to the Initial Decision were received.

As Assistant Commissioner, Division of Family Development, Department of Human Services, 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. 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. 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.* Failure to comply with the requirements identified in the SP, without good cause, shall result in the termination of EA benefits and a six-month period of EA ineligibility. *Ibid.*

Here, the ALJ found, and the record substantiates, that Petitioner applied for EA on March 24, 2025, on behalf of herself, her spouse, and their three minor children. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1. On that same date, Petitioner executed an EA SP, wherein she agreed, among other things, to submit proof of weekly housing searches. See Initial Decision at 2-3; see also Exhibits R-1, R-2, (translated versions Exhibits R-3, R-4) and N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.6(a). Additionally, Petitioner received an EA Verification List which required the submission of weekly housing searches. *Ibid.* Neither Petitioner, nor her spouse, ever submitted any housing search logs to the Agency, nor did either ever communicate any reason for their failure to comply. See Initial Decision at 3. At the time of the hearing, Petitioner and her husband testified that they were unable to find any housing in their price range and therefore did not submit housing logs showing housing they could not afford, for fear they would be forced to pay such rent. *Ibid.*



The ALJ found, and the record reflects, that Petitioner failed to comply with the requirements contained in her SP, with no good cause credibly shown, by continually failing to provide proof of housing searches. See Initial Decision at 3-5; see also N.J.A.C. 10:90-6.6(a). Based on the foregoing, 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. Ibid. I agree.

By way of comment, because Petitioner has received continued assistance pending the outcome of this fair hearing, her six-month EA penalty will begin to run as of the date of the issuance of this Final Agency Decision.

By way of additional comment, the Agency shall refer Petitioner to any and all agencies and organizations that may be able to assist with her 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. February 18, 2026

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner

