

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
STATE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS AND RULES

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF: [REDACTED],  
Claimant

Reg. No: 2007-11657  
Issue No: 2009; 4031  
Case No: [REDACTED]  
Load No: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date:  
September 5, 2007  
Marquette County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Carmen G. Fahie

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on Wednesday, September 4, 2007. The claimant personally appeared and testified on his own behalf with his friend [REDACTED] as a witness.

ISSUE

Did the department properly deny the claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P), retroactive Medical Assistance, and State Disability Assistance (SDA)?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the competent, material and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

(1) On February 23, 2007, the claimant applied for MA-P and SDA with retroactive MA-P to November 2006.

(2) On April 6, 2007, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied the claimant's application for MA-P and retroactive MA-P stating that the claimant was capable of performing other work per 20 CFR 416.920(f) and for SDA that the claimant's physical and mental impairment does not prevent employment for 90 days or more.

(3) On April 9, 2007, the department caseworker sent the claimant a notice that his application was denied.

(4) On May 16, 2007, the department received a hearing request from the claimant, contesting the department's negative action.

(5) On July 26, 2007, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) considered the submitted objective medical evidence in making its determination of MA-P, retroactive MA-P, and SDA eligibility for the claimant. The SHRT report reads in part:

The claimant is 33 years old and alleges disability due to degenerative disc disease and bulging disc in the lower back. The claimant has an 11<sup>th</sup> grade education and a history of working in construction.

The claimant reports back pain. There are no neurological abnormalities noted. He had full strength. The claimant had a history of alcohol abuse but denied current use. He was depressed, but didn't follow through with treatment in [REDACTED]. In [REDACTED] he was flat, blunted, and depressed. However, his thought processes were logical and coherent. The claimant would be able to do simple, unskilled, light work.

The claimant's impairments do not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security listing. The medical evidence of record indicates that the claimant retains the capacity to perform simple, unskilled, light work. In lieu of detailed work history, the claimant will be returned to other work. Therefore, based on the claimant's vocational profile (younger individual, 11<sup>th</sup> grade education, and history of working in construction), MA-P is denied using Vocational Rule 202.20 as a guide. Retroactive MA-P was

considered in this case and is also denied. SDA is denied per PEM 261 because the nature and severity of the claimant's impairments would not preclude work activity at the above stated level for 90 days.

(6) During the hearing on September 5, 2007, the claimant requested permission to submit additional medical information that needed to be reviewed by SHRT. Additional medical information was received from the local office on October 17, 2008 and forwarded to SHRT for review on October 21, 2008.

(7) On October 28, 2008, the SHRT considered the newly submitted objective medical evidence in making its determination of MA-P, retroactive MA-P, and SDA. The SHRT report reads in part:

The claimant is 34 years old and alleges disability due to degenerative disc disease and bulging disc in the lower back. The claimant has an 11<sup>th</sup> grade education and a history of working in construction.

The claimant has a history of chronic back pain. A lumbar diskogram in [REDACTED] showed degenerative disc disease and an annular tear at L4-5. He underwent discectomy and basically a disc replacement in [REDACTED]. In [REDACTED], he continued to have pain, but his strength was 5/5 in both lower extremities. In [REDACTED], he had normal gait, normal reflexes, and normal motor function. Based on the objective evidence in file, the claimant would be able to do light work.

The claimant's impairments do not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security listing. The medical evidence of record indicates that the claimant retains the capacity to perform simple, unskilled, light work. In lieu of detailed work history, the claimant will be returned to other work. Therefore, based on the claimant's vocational profile (younger individual, limited education, and history of working in construction), MA-P is denied using Vocational Rule 202.17 as a guide. Retroactive MA-P was considered in this case and is also denied. SDA is denied per PEM 261 because the nature and severity of the claimant's impairments would not preclude work activity at the above stated level for 90 days.

(8) The claimant is a 36 year-old man whose date of birth is [REDACTED]. The claimant is 5' 8" tall and weighs 150 pounds. The claimant has gained 10 pounds in the past years because he's not active. The claimant completed the 11<sup>th</sup> grade of high school. The claimant can read and write and do basic math. The claimant is currently employed as a home health aid grossing [REDACTED] per month. The claimant has also been employed as a carpenter, mechanic, masonry worker, and roofing worker.

(9) The claimant's alleged impairments are degenerative disc disease, depression, and bulging discs in the lower back.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program which provides financial assistance for disabled persons is established by 2004 PA 344. The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MAC R 400.3151-400.3180. Department policies are found in the Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by Title XIX of the Social Security Act and is implemented by Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the MA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MCL 400.105. Department policies are found in the Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

"Disability" is:

...the inability to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.... 20 CFR 416.905.

...We follow a set order to determine whether you are disabled. We review any current work activity, the severity of your impairment(s), your residual functional capacity, your past work, and your age, education and work experience. If we can find that you are disabled or not disabled at any point in the review, we do not review your claim further.... 20 CFR 416.920.

...If you are working and the work you are doing is substantial gainful activity, we will find that you are not disabled regardless of your medical condition or your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(b).

...[The impairment]...must have lasted or must be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. We call this the duration requirement. 20 CFR 416.909.

...If you do not have any impairment or combination of impairments which significantly limits your physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, we will find that you do not have a severe impairment and are, therefore, not disabled. We will not consider your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(c).

[In reviewing your impairment]...We need reports about your impairments from acceptable medical sources.... 20 CFR 416.913(a).

...Statements about your pain or other symptoms will not alone establish that you are disabled; there must be medical signs and laboratory findings which show that you have a medical impairment.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

...You must provide medical evidence showing that you have an impairment(s) and how severe it is during the time you say that you are disabled. 20 CFR 416.912(c).

... [The record must show a severe impairment] which significantly limits your physical or mental ability to do basic work activities....  
20 CFR 416.920(c).

...Medical reports should include --

- (1) Medical history.
- (2) Clinical findings (such as the results of physical or mental status examinations);
- (3) Laboratory findings (such as blood pressure, X-rays);
- (4) Diagnosis (statement of disease or injury based on its signs and symptoms).... 20 CFR 416.913(b).

...The medical evidence...must be complete and detailed enough to allow us to make a determination about whether you are disabled or blind. 20 CFR 416.913(d).

Medical findings consist of symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings:

- (a) **Symptoms** are your own description of your physical or mental impairment. Your statements alone are not enough to establish that there is a physical or mental impairment.
- (b) **Signs** are anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which can be observed, apart from your statements (symptoms). Signs must be shown by medically acceptable clinical diagnostic techniques. Psychiatric signs are medically demonstrable phenomena which indicate specific psychological abnormalities e.g., abnormalities of behavior, mood, thought, memory, orientation, development, or perception. They must also be shown by observable facts that can be medically described and evaluated.
- (c) **Laboratory findings** are anatomical, physiological, or psychological phenomena which can be shown by the use of medically acceptable laboratory diagnostic techniques. Some of these diagnostic techniques include chemical tests, electrophysiological studies (electrocardiogram, electroencephalogram, etc.), roentgenological studies (X-rays), and psychological tests. 20 CFR 416.928.

It must allow us to determine --

- (1) The nature and limiting effects of your impairment(s) for any period in question;
- (2) The probable duration of your impairment; and
- (3) Your residual functional capacity to do work-related physical and mental activities. 20 CFR 416.913(d).

Information from other sources may also help us to understand how your impairment(s) affects your ability to work. 20 CFR 416.913(e).

...You can only be found disabled if you are unable to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death, or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. See 20 CFR 416.905. Your impairment must result from anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which are demonstrable by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques.... 20 CFR 416.927(a)(1).

...Evidence that you submit or that we obtain may contain medical opinions. Medical opinions are statements from physicians and psychologists or other acceptable medical sources that reflect judgments about the nature and severity of your impairment(s), including your symptoms, diagnosis and prognosis, what you can still do despite impairment(s), and your physical or mental restrictions. 20 CFR 416.927(a)(2).

...In deciding whether you are disabled, we will always consider the medical opinions in your case record together with the rest of the relevant evidence we receive. 20 CFR 416.927(b).

After we review all of the evidence relevant to your claim, including medical opinions, we make findings about what the evidence shows. 20 CFR 416.927(c).

...If all of the evidence we receive, including all medical opinion(s), is consistent, and there is sufficient evidence for us to decide whether you are disabled, we will make our determination or decision based on that evidence. 20 CFR 416.927(c)(1).

...If any of the evidence in your case record, including any medical opinion(s), is inconsistent with other evidence or is internally inconsistent, we will weigh all of the evidence and see whether we can decide whether you are disabled based on the evidence we have. 20 CFR 416.927(c)(2).

[As Judge]...We are responsible for making the determination or decision about whether you meet the statutory definition of disability. In so doing, we review all of the medical findings and other evidence that support a medical source's statement that you are disabled.... 20 CFR 416.927(e).

...A statement by a medical source that you are "disabled" or "unable to work" does not mean that we will determine that you are disabled. 20 CFR 416.927(e).

...If you have an impairment(s) which meets the duration requirement and is listed in Appendix 1 or is equal to a listed impairment(s), we will find you disabled without considering your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(d).

...If we cannot make a decision on your current work activities or medical facts alone and you have a severe impairment, we will then review your residual functional capacity and the physical and mental demands of the work you have done in the past. If you can still do this kind of work, we will find that you are not disabled. 20 CFR 416.920(e).

If you cannot do any work you have done in the past because you have a severe impairment(s), we will consider your residual functional capacity and your age, education, and past work experience to see if you can do other work. If you cannot, we will find you disabled. 20 CFR 416.920(f)(1).

...Your residual functional capacity is what you can still do despite limitations. If you have more than one impairment, we will consider all of your impairment(s) of which we are aware. We will consider your ability to meet certain demands of jobs, such as physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements, and other functions, as described in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) of this section. Residual functional capacity is an assessment based on all of the relevant evidence.... 20 CFR 416.945(a).



...This assessment of your remaining capacity for work is not a decision on whether you are disabled, but is used as the basis for determining the particular types of work you may be able to do despite your impairment(s)... 20 CFR 416.945(a).

...In determining whether you are disabled, we will consider all of your symptoms, including pain, and the extent to which your symptoms can reasonably be accepted as consistent with objective medical evidence, and other evidence.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

...In evaluating the intensity and persistence of your symptoms, including pain, we will consider all of the available evidence, including your medical history, the medical signs and laboratory findings and statements about how your symptoms affect you... We will then determine the extent to which your alleged functional limitations or restrictions due to pain or other symptoms can reasonably be accepted as consistent with the medical signs and laboratory findings and other evidence to decide how your symptoms affect your ability to work.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

If you have more than one impairment, we will consider all of your impairments of which we are aware. We will consider your ability to meet certain demands of jobs, such as physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements, and other functions as described in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) of this section. Residual functional capacity is an assessment based upon all of the relevant evidence. This assessment of your capacity for work is not a decision on whether you are disabled but is used as a basis for determining the particular types of work you may be able to do despite your impairment. 20 CFR 416.945.

...When we assess your physical abilities, we first assess the nature and extent of your physical limitations and then determine your residual functional capacity for work activity on a regular and continuing basis. A limited ability to perform certain physical demands of work activity, such as sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, or other physical functions (including manipulative or postural functions, such as reaching, handling, stooping or crouching), may reduce your ability to do past work and other work. 20 CFR 416.945(b).

Federal regulations require that the department use the same operative definition for “disabled” as used for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. 42 CFR 435.540(a).

“Disability” is:

...the inability to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months  
... 20 CFR 416.905

In determining whether an individual is disabled, 20 CFR 416.920 requires the trier of fact to follow a sequential evaluation process by which current work activity, the severity of the impairment(s), residual functional capacity, and vocational factors (i.e., age, education, and work experience) are assessed in that order. When a determination that an individual is or is not disabled can be made at any step in the sequential evaluation, evaluation under a subsequent step is not necessary.

First, the trier of fact must determine if the individual is working and if the work is substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.920(b). At Step 1, the claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity working part-time grossing \$144 per month. Therefore, the claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

Secondly, in order to be considered disabled for purposes of MA, a person must have a severe impairment. 20 CFR 416.920(c). A severe impairment is an impairment which significantly limits an individual’s physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities. Basic work activities means, the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. Examples of these include:

- (1) Physical functions such as walking, standing, sitting, lifting, pushing, pulling, reaching, carrying or handling;
- (2) Capacities for seeing, hearing, and speaking;

- (3) Understanding, carrying out, and remembering simple instructions;
- (4) Use of judgment;
- (5) Responding appropriately to supervision, co-workers and usual work situations; and
- (6) Dealing with changes in a routine work setting. 20 CFR 416.921(b).

The purpose of the second step in the sequential evaluation process is to screen out claims lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v. Bowen* 880 F2d 860, 862 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir, 1988). As a result, the department may only screen out claims at this level which are “totally groundless” solely from a medical standpoint. The *Higgs* court used the severity requirement as a “*de minimus* hurdle” in the disability determination. The *de minimus* standard is a provision of a law that allows the court to disregard trifling matters.

The objective medical evidence on the record further substantiates the following:

On [REDACTED], the claimant’s treating physician submitted a progress note on the claimant’s behalf. The claimant was alert, oriented, and anxious appearing. The claimant had a normal examination except that the treating physician noted that his back exam showed no tenderness to palpation over spine. The claimant had a scar just superior to the right hip, which he stated was where they went in to do the disc replacement. The claimant’s strength was 5/5 in both lower extremities, but he was somewhat shaky with extension and flexion at the knee. The claimant has continued chronic pain without much improvement following recent neurosurgical disc replacement. The claimant was given a prescription for medication and physical therapy for strengthening and conditioning. (Department Exhibit 102)

On [REDACTED] the claimant underwent a complete anterolateral discectomy and foraminotomy with partial corpectomy and insertion of a nubac intervertebral body device at L4-L5 at [REDACTED]. There were no complications and the claimant tolerated the procedure well and was returned to the recovery room in good condition.

(Department Exhibit 88 and 98)

On [REDACTED], the claimant underwent a lumbar diskogram at L3-4, L4-5, and L5-S1 at [REDACTED]. There were no complications and the claimant did not have any paresthesias or difficulty with his leg during the procedure. The dye did leak out at L4-5 and hence he may have had some Marcaine leak out as well but the disc definitely had an annular tear at L4-5. This was a classic diskogram with clear, concordant pain at L4-5 only.

(Department Exhibit 94-95)

On [REDACTED], the claimant's treating specialist at [REDACTED] stated that the claimant could barely get 10-15 degrees forward flexion without having pain. Rotation was about 5-10 degrees. He was very stiff. Neurologically, he had +2 patellar reflexes and +2 Achilles. The claimant had a downgoing Babinski's. His extensor hallucis longus and quad strength appeared to be 5/5 bilaterally. The claimant had full sensation of the lower extremities. The claimant did report pain in the medial aspect of the right thigh. The claimant had pain with internal and external rotation. His straight leg raises were positive for posterior thigh pain, both legs at 45 degrees. The claimant appeared to have more range of motion pain on the right hip than the left.

X-rays were reviewed at this time showing a fairly normal looking lumbar spine although he had a bit of a bend to the left on his standing x-ray. The treating specialist believed this had more to do with his pain issues than his scoliosis issues. The claimant did show slight

degenerative disc disease at L5-S1. The claimant's joint spaces appeared to be within normal limits. His most recent MRI showed degenerative disc disease at three levels with the worst being at L4-5. The claimant also had an annular tear there and on the axial film showed some spinal stenosis along with his annular tear. The treating specialist's impression was degenerative disc disease, right hip pain with range of motion, and right medial thigh pain to the knee.

(Department Exhibit 86)

On [REDACTED], the claimant underwent a psychiatric/psychological medical report by an independent medical examiner. The claimant was diagnosed with major depressive disorder, current and moderate, anxiety disorder NOS with generalized phobic and panic reactions, history of alcohol abuse denied by the claimant, and a learning disorder. He was given a Tier II diagnosis of personality disorder. The claimant's GAF was 55-60. His prognosis was guarded and improved with treatment and reduction of stressors. The claimant should be able to manage his funds. The claimant was in contact with reality, but with low self esteem.

The independent medical consultant reported that the claimant was on time for his appointment and was driven by his girlfriend. The claimant looked sad and lethargic with fair hygiene. The claimant had a slow gait and unremarkable posture. He was cooperative with the examiner. The claimant was serious and sad in his expression. The claimant appeared to be minimizing his use of alcohol and denies any opiates or drug-seeking behavior. His symptoms were not exaggerated. His insight was low. The claimant was vague, spoke in a shaky quivering voice, and in a monotone. The claimant was not very spontaneous to questions, but was logical and relevant. The claimant denied any hallucinations, delusions, or psychotic train of thought. The claimant denied being controlled by others or any unusual powers. The claimant admitted

that he felt he had a worthless existence and admitted to daily suicidal ideation, but no plan to act on it.

The claimant did have sleep disturbances where he was not able to sleep more than several hours a night or sleeping excessively. The claimant had frequent eye blinking and flat affect were his mood was depressed. The claimant was oriented x3. The claimant had normal memory, information, calculations, abstract thinking, similarities and differences, and judgment. The claimant was diagnosed with major depressive disorder, recurrent and moderate, anxiety disorder with generalized phobic and panic reactions, history of alcohol abuse denied by the claimant on examination, and a learning disorder. The claimant was given a Tier II diagnosis of personality disorder. The claimant was given a GAF of 55-60 where his prognosis was guarded. The prognosis was improved with treatment and reduction of stressors. The claimant was able to manage his own benefit funds. (Department Exhibit 1-7)

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence in the record indicates that the claimant has established that he has a severe impairment. The claimant is in treatment and taking medication for his mental impairments. His GAF from an independent psychiatric evaluation ranged from 55-60 with a diagnosis of major depressive disorder and anxiety disorder on [REDACTED]. The claimant was diagnosed with degenerative disc disease in [REDACTED] where he had disc replacement in [REDACTED] and prior surgery in [REDACTED]. Therefore, the claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 2. However, this Administrative Law Judge will proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine disability because Step 2 is a *de minimus* standard.

In the third step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment (or combination of impairments) is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant's medical record will not support a finding that claimant's impairment(s) is a "listed impairment" or equal to a listed impairment. See Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404, Part A. Accordingly, claimant cannot be found to be disabled based upon medical evidence alone. 20 CFR 416.920(d). This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant's impairments do not rise to the level necessary to be listed as disabling by law. Therefore, the claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 3.

In the fourth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment(s) prevents claimant from doing past relevant work. 20 CFR 416.920(e). It is the finding of this Administrative Law Judge, based upon the medical evidence and objective, physical and psychological findings, that the claimant does not have a driver's license and does not drive as a result of a DUI. The claimant cooks once a day with no problem. The claimant grocery shops once a month with no problem. The claimant does clean his own home by doing regular maintenance, but is affected by pain. The claimant doesn't do any outside work and does not have any hobbies. The claimant felt that his condition has worsened in the past year because it has intensified. The claimant stated that he has depression where he is currently taking medication and in therapy off and on at 1-70.

The claimant wakes up at 7:30 a.m. He lies in bed and watches TV. He does what needs to be done. He goes to bed at 12:00 a.m.

The claimant felt that he could ½ a mile. The claimant wasn't sure how long he could stand or sit. The heaviest weight he could carry and walk was 10 pounds. The claimant's level of pain on a scale of 1 to 10 without medication was a 10 that decreases to a 5/6 with medication.

The claimant does smoke a ½ pack of cigarettes a day. The claimant stopped drinking in April 2007 where he would drink at social events and was moderately functional. The claimant does not or has ever taken illegal or illicit drugs.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant has established that he cannot perform any of his prior work. The claimant is currently working part-time as a home health aid, but because of his back and mental issues would probably not be able to do that job full-time. The claimant has also been employed as a carpenter, mechanic, masonry worker, and roofing worker, which are jobs that require a certain amount of dexterity that the claimant may be unable to have with his degenerative disc disease and specialized detail work which with the claimant's mental impairments he may have a difficult time performing. Therefore, the claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 4. However, the Administrative Law Judge will still proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine whether or not the claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his prior jobs.

In the fifth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment(s) prevents claimant from doing other work.

20 CFR 416.920(f). This determination is based upon the claimant's:

- (1) residual functional capacity defined simply as "what can you still do despite you limitations?" 20 CFR 416.945;
- (2) age, education, and work experience, 20 CFR 416.963-.965; and



- (3) the kinds of work which exist in significant numbers in the national economy which the claimant could perform despite his/her limitations. 20 CFR 416.966.

...To determine the physical exertion requirements of work in the national economy, we classify jobs as sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very heavy. These terms have the same meaning as they have in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, published by the Department of Labor.... 20 CFR 416.967.

**Sedentary work.** Sedentary work involves lifting no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. Although a sedentary job is defined as one which involves sitting, a certain amount of walking and standing is often necessary in carrying out job duties. Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. 20 CFR 416.967(a).

**Light work.** Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 10 pounds. Even though the weight lifted may be very little, a job is in this category when it requires a good deal of walking or standing, or when it involves sitting most of the time with some pushing and pulling of arm or leg controls.... 20 CFR 416.967(b).

...To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, you must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. If someone can do light work, we determine that he or she can also do sedentary work, unless there are additional limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. 20 CFR 416.967(b).

**Unskilled work.** Unskilled work is work which needs little or no judgment to do simple duties that can be learned on the job in a short period of time. The job may or may not require considerable strength.... 20 CFR 416.968(a).

The claimant has submitted insufficient evidence that he lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his previous employment or that he is physically unable to do any tasks demanded of him. The claimant's testimony as to his limitation indicates his limitations are exertional and non-exertional.

For mental disorders, severity is assessed in terms of the functional limitations imposed by the impairment. Functional limitations are assessed using the criteria in paragraph (B) of the listings for mental disorders (descriptions of restrictions of activities of daily living, social functioning; concentration, persistence, or pace; and ability to tolerate increased mental demands associated with competitive work).... 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(C).

In the instant case, the claimant stated that he has depression where he is currently taking medication and in therapy off and on. The claimant underwent an independent medical consultative psychiatric exam on [REDACTED]. The claimant was diagnosed with major depressive disorder, recurrent and moderate, anxiety disorder NOS, with generalized phobic and panic reactions. The claimant had a history of alcohol abuse that he denied and a learning disability by self report. The claimant was also given a Tier II diagnosis of personality disorder. He was given a GAF of 55-60 that shows moderate symptoms or moderate difficulty in social, occupational, or school functioning. The claimant was given a guarded prognosis that would improve with treatment and reduction of stressors. As a result, there is sufficient medical evidence of a mental impairment that is so severe that it would prevent the claimant from performing skilled, detailed work, but the claimant should be able to perform simple, unskilled work.

At Step 5, the claimant should be able to meet the physical requirements of light work, based upon the claimant's physical abilities. Under the Medical-Vocational guidelines, a younger individual with a limited or less education, and an unskilled and skilled work history, who is limited to light work, is not considered disabled. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Rule 202.19. The Medical-Vocational guidelines are not strictly applied with non-exertional impairments such as depression, anxiety, and personality disorder. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P,

Appendix 2, Section 200.00. Using the Medical-Vocational guidelines as a framework for making this decision and after giving full consideration to the claimant's physical and mental impairments, the Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant can still perform a wide range of simple, unskilled, light activities and that the claimant does not meet the definition of disabled under the MA program.

The department's Program Eligibility Manual provides the following policy statements and instructions for caseworkers regarding the SDA program.

**DISABILITY – SDA**

**DEPARTMENT POLICY**

**SDA**

To receive SDA, a person must be disabled, caring for a disabled person, or age 65 or older.

**Note:** There is no disability requirement for AMP. PEM 261, p. 1.

**DISABILITY**

A person is disabled for SDA purposes if he:

- . receives other specified disability-related benefits or services, or
- . resides in a qualified Special Living Arrangement facility, or
- . is certified as unable to work due to mental or physical disability for at least 90 days from the onset of the disability.
- . is diagnosed as having Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

If the client's circumstances change so that the basis of his/her disability is no longer valid, determine if he/she meets any of the other disability criteria. Do NOT simply initiate case closure. PEM, Item 261, p. 1.

### Other Benefits or Services

Persons receiving one of the following benefits or services meet the SDA disability criteria:

- . Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance (RSDI), due to disability or blindness.
- . Supplemental Security Income (SSI), due to disability or blindness.
- . Medicaid (including spend-down) as blind or disabled if the disability/blindness is based on:
  - .. a DE/MRT/SRT determination, or
  - .. a hearing decision, or
  - .. having SSI based on blindness or disability recently terminated (within the past 12 months) for financial reasons.

Medicaid received by former SSI recipients based on policies in PEM 150 under "**SSI TERMINATIONS,**" INCLUDING "**MA While Appealing Disability Termination,**" does not qualify a person as disabled for SDA. Such persons must be certified as disabled or meet one of the other SDA qualifying criteria. See "**Medical Certification of Disability**" below.

- . Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS). A person is receiving services if he has been determined eligible for MRS and has an active MRS case. Do not refer or advise applicants to apply for MRS for the purpose of qualifying for SDA.
- . Special education services from the local intermediate school district. To qualify, the person may be:
  - .. attending school under a special education plan approved by the local Individual Educational Planning Committee (IEPC); **or**
  - .. not attending under an IEPC approved plan but has been certified as a special education student **and** is attending a school program leading to a high school diploma or its equivalent, **and** is under age 26. The program does not have to be designated as "special education" as long as the person has been certified as a

special education student. Eligibility on this basis continues until the person completes the high school program or reaches age 26, whichever is earlier.

- . Refugee or asylee who lost eligibility for Social Security Income (SSI) due to exceeding the maximum time limit PEM, Item 261, pp. 1-2.

Because the claimant does not meet the definition of disabled under the MA program and because the evidence in the record does not establish that the claimant is unable to work for a period exceeding 90 days, the claimant does not meet the disability criteria for SDA.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department has appropriately established that it was acting in compliance with department policy when it denied the claimant's application for MA-P, retroactive MA-P, and SDA. The claimant should be able to perform any level of simple, unskilled, light work. The department has established its case by a preponderance of the evidence.

Accordingly, the department's decision is **AFFIRMED**.

/s/  
Carmen G. Fahie  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Ismael Ahmed, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: May 26, 2010

Date Mailed: May 26, 2010

**NOTICE:** Administrative Hearings may order a rehearing or reconsideration on either its own motion or at the request of a party within 30 days of the mailing date of this Decision and Order. Administrative Hearings will not order a rehearing or reconsideration on the Department's motion where the final decision cannot be implemented within 90 days of the filing of the original request.

The Claimant may appeal the Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the mailing of the Decision and Order or, if a timely request for rehearing was made, within 30 days of the receipt date of the rehearing decision.

CGF/vmc

cc:

