

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: 2007-11050
Issue No: 2009, 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
December 3, 2007
Macomb County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Jeanne M. VanderHeide

HEARING DECISION

This matter was conducted by Administrative Law Judge [REDACTED] on December 3, 2007 pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon the Claimant's request for hearing received by the Department. Judge [REDACTED] left State employment before the hearing decision was written. The undersigned Administrative Law Judge has written this hearing decision after review of a evidence in the record including the recording of the actual hearing. At the hearing, the Claimant was present and testified. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was present and represented Claimant. [REDACTED] appeared on behalf of the Department.

ISSUE

Whether the Department properly determined that the Claimant was not disabled for purposes of Medical Assistance ("MA") program.

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. Claimant filed for MA & SDA on May 9, 2006. Claimant requested MA and SDA retroactive to April 2006.
2. Claimant's impairments are gastric ulcer, personality disorder, spinal stenosis and neuroforaminal narrowing, asthma, arthritis, and polyps. Claimant also testified that he has a hernia and depression.
3. Claimant's physical symptoms are hard breathing, shortness of breath, pain in knee, stomach pain, and low back pain with radiation and numbness into his left leg.
4. Claimant testified that he is capable of doing factory work with no heavy lifting.
5. Claimant is 6' tall and weighs 220 pounds.
6. Claimant testified to the following physical limitations:
 - Sitting-1 hour
 - Standing-2-3 hours
 - Walking-¼ mile
 - Lifting-30 lbs.
7. Claimant's impairments will last or have lasted for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.
8. Claimant is 49 years of age.
9. Claimant completed 8th grade in high school.
10. Claimant was last employed in 2004.
11. Claimant has employment experience doing home improvement including drywall, laying brick, concrete finishing and plumbing.
12. Claimant testified that he performs household activities such as cooking and outdoor chores, such as feeding the cows and chickens.
13. The Department found that Claimant was not disabled and denied Claimant's application on 11/14/06.

Alcohol dependency treatment

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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 400.1 *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).

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 CFR416.905

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 impairment(s); residual functional capacity, and vocational factors (i.e., age, education, and work experience) are assessed in that order. A determination that an individual is disabled can be made at any step in the sequential evaluation. Then evaluation under a subsequent step is not necessary.

1. Current Substantial Gainful Activity

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). In this case, under the first step, the Claimant

last worked in 2004. Therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receipt of disability benefits under Step 1.

2. Medically Determinable Impairment – 12 Months

Second, 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 mean the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. Examples 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. The court in *Salmi v Sec’y of Health and Human Servs*, 774 F.2d 685 (6th Cir 1985) held that an impairment qualifies as “non-severe” only if it “would not affect the claimant’s ability to work,” regardless of the claimant’s age, education, or prior work experience.” *Id.* At 691-92. Only slight abnormalities that minimally affect a claimant’s ability to work can be considered non-severe. *Higgs v Bowen*, 880 F.2d 860, 862 (6th Cir. 1988); *Farris v Sec’y of Health & Human Servs*, 773 F.2d 85, 90 (6th Cir. 1985).

In this case, the Claimant has presented medical evidence showing medical diagnoses of spinal stenosis at L4-L5, neuro foraminal narrowing at L4-5 and L5-S1, gastric ulcer and personality disorder NOS. Claimant testified to physical limitations in terms of sitting, standing, walking and lifting.

The medical evidence has established that Claimant has physical and mental impairments that have more than a minimal effect on basic work activities; and Claimant's impairments have lasted continuously for more than twelve months. It is necessary to continue to evaluate the Claimant's impairments under step three.

3. Listed Impairment

In the third step of the sequential analysis of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the Claimant's impairment is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. Based on the hearing record, the undersigned finds that the Claimant's medical record will not support findings that the Claimant's physical and mental impairment are "listed impairment(s)" or equal to a listed impairment. 20 CFR 416.920(a) (4) (iii). According to the medical evidence, alone, the Claimant cannot be found to be disabled.

Appendix I, Listing of Impairments discusses the analysis and criteria necessary to a finding of a listed impairment. The Listing 1.04 *Disorders of the Spine* was reviewed. In this case, this Administrative Law Judge finds the Claimant is not presently disabled at the third step for purposes of the Medical Assistance (MA) program because the medical evidence reviewed does not show that the physical impairments meet the intent or severity of the listings. Sequential evaluation under step four or five is necessary. 20 CFR 416.905.

4. Ability to Perform Past Relevant Work

In the fourth step of the sequential evaluation of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment(s) prevent him/her from doing past relevant work. 20 CFR

416.920(e). Residual functional capacity (RFC) will be assessed based on impairment(s), and any related symptoms, such as pain, which may cause physical and mental limitations that affect what you can do in a work setting. RFC is the most you can still do despite your limitations. All the relevant medical and other evidence in your case record applies in the assessment.

Claimant has presented medical evidence supporting a gastric ulcer, spinal stenosis, and neuro foraminal narrowing. In addition, the psychiatric report indicates that Claimant has a medical diagnosis of personality disorder. There are no medical records to support Claimant's testimony of asthma, arthritis, polyps, bleeding ulcers or hernia.

Claimant's prior employment included home improvement jobs such as drywall, laying brick, concrete finishing and some plumbing. These jobs are all considered semi-skilled and require a medium to heavy exertional level. Claimant has not provided any medical evidence of limitations imposed by a physician. However, considering Claimant's testimony about his physical limitations, the undersigned finds the Claimant unable to return to past relevant work in any of the above listing prior occupations. Evaluation under step five will be made according to the law.

5. Ability to Perform Other Work

In the fifth step of the sequential evaluation of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine: if the claimant's impairment(s) prevent him/her from doing other work. 20 CFR 416.920(f). This determination is based on the claimant's:

- (1) 'Residual function capacity,' defined simply as "what you can still do despite your limitations;" 20 CFR 416.945.
- (2) Age, education and work experience, and
- (3) The kinds of work which exist in significant numbers in the national economy which the claimant could perform despite his/her impairments.

20 CFR 416.960. *Felton v. DSS*, 161 Mich. App. 690, 696-697, 411 N.W.2d 829 (1987).

It is the finding of the undersigned, based upon the medical evidence, objective physical findings, and hearing record that Claimant's RFC for work activities on a regular and continuing basis is functionally at the level of sedentary work. While Claimant can lift up to 30 pounds, his walking and standing are limited and, therefore, Claimant would not be able to manage to exertional requirements of light work. 20 CFR 416.967.

Appendix 2 to Subpart P of Part 404 Medical-Vocational Guidelines 20 CFR 416.967(a) describes sedentary work:

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.

Claimant at forty-five is considered a *younger individual*; a category of individuals in age group 45-49 when age is a lesser advantage factor for making adjustment to other work; Rule 201.20; education: Limited or less—at least literate and able to communicate in English; previous work experience: skilled or semiskilled—skills not transferable; Claimant is 'not disabled' per Rule 201.19. This is supported by Claimant's testimony that he would be able to return to work factory work as long as there was no heavy lifting. Furthermore, while Claimant has a diagnosis of personality disorder, Claimant's GAF was 69 which is considered 'some mild symptoms OR some difficulty in social, occupational, or school functioning, but generally functioning pretty well'.

It is the finding of the undersigned, based upon the medical data and hearing record that Claimant is 'not disabled' at the fifth step.

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program which provides financial assistance for disabled persons is established by 1939 PA 280, as amended. The Department of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.1 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). A person is considered disabled for purposes of SDA if the person has a physical or mental impairment which meets federal SSI disability standards for at least ninety days. Receipt of SSI or RSDI benefits based on disability or blindness or the receipt of MA benefits based on disability or blindness (MA-P) automatically qualifies an individual as disabled for purposes of the SDA program. Other specific financial and non-financial eligibility criteria are found in PEM 261.

In this case, there is sufficient evidence to support a finding that Claimant's impairment is not disabling him under SSI disability standards. This Administrative Law Judge finds the Claimant is not "disabled" for purposes of the MA program.

DECISION AND ORDER

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Department was correct in determining that the claimant was not disabled for the purposes of the MA / SDA program and IT IS ORDERED that the Department's decision in this regard be and is hereby AFFIRMED.

/s/
Jeanne M. VanderHeide
Administrative Law Judge
for Jacqueline Hall-Keith

Date Signed: March 16, 2009

Date Mailed: March 16, 2009

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.

JV/dj

cc:

