

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: 2007-19622
Issue No: 2009
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
October 23, 2007
Oscoda County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Jay W. Sexton

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 in Mio on October 23, 2007. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

The department was represented by Kim Wright (FIM) and Bonnie L. Ewald (ES).

Claimant requested additional time to submit new medical evidence. Claimant's new medical evidence was sent to the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) on November 3, 2008. Claimant waived the timeliness requirement so that his new medical evidence could be reviewed by SHRT.

After SHRT's second disability denial, the ALJ issued the Decision below.

ISSUE

Did claimant establish a severe physical impairment expected to preclude him from substantial gainful work, **continuously**, for one year (MA-P)?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

(1) Claimant is a MA-P applicant (February 23, 2007) who was denied by SHRT (September 26, 2007) due to claimant's failure to establish an impairment which meets the department's severity and duration requirements.

(2) Claimant's vocational factors are: age—43; education –high school diploma; work experience—worked as a welder for an auto parts company for 24 years.

(3) Claimant has not performed Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) since he was a welder in September 2006. Claimant was injured in a non-work related accident in September 2006.

(4) Claimant has the following unable-to-work complaints:

- (a) Status post back surgery (██████████);
- (b) Difficulty standing for long periods;
- (c) Difficulty bending;
- (d) Claimant is participating in ongoing physical therapy;
- (e) Right hand dysfunction;
- (f) Body tremors.

(5) SHRT evaluated claimant's medical evidence as follows:

OBJECTIVE MEDICAL EVIDENCE (██████████):

The medical evidence of record submitted for review reported claimant status post lumbar spine fusion ██████████. At the follow-up visit of ██████████, claimant was doing very well. He was walking. The legs were feeling better and the back pain was better (pages 56 and 64).

ANALYSIS:

The condition improved with treatment.

(6) Claimant performs the following Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): dressing, bathing, cooking, dish washing, light cleaning, and grocery shopping. Claimant lives alone. He weighs 185 pounds, is 6'1" tall and walks approximately ½ mile on a daily basis.

(7) Claimant has a valid driver's license and drives an automobile approximately 30 times a month. Claimant is not computer literate.

(8) The following medical records are persuasive:

(a) A [REDACTED] narrative report by claimant's neurosurgeon was reviewed.

(9) The probative medical evidence does not establish an acute physical (exertional) impairment expected to prevent claimant from performing all customary work functions for the required period of time.

(10) Claimant has applied for Federal disability benefits with the Social Security Administration. His application was recently denied. He has filed a timely appeal.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

CLAIMANT'S POSITION

Claimant thinks he is entitled to MA-P based on the impairments listed in paragraph #4, above.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The department thinks that claimant has the Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) to perform normal work functions.

The department thinks the medical evidence of record shows that claimant's back condition has improved and should continue to improve, with treatment, and does not prevent all work activity for 12 months from the date of surgery.

The department denied claimant's MA-P application due to lack of severity and duration.

LEGAL BASIS

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).

Pursuant to Federal Rule 42 CFR 435.540, the Department of Human Services uses the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) policy in determining eligibility for disability under the Medical Assistance program. Under SSI, disability is defined as:

...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.

A set order is used to determine disability. Current work activity, severity of impairments, residual functional capacity, past work, age, or education and work experience is reviewed. If there is a finding that an individual is disabled or not disabled at any point in the review, there will be no further evaluation. 20 CFR 416.920.

If an individual is working and the work is substantial gainful activity, the individual is not disabled regardless of the medical condition, education and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(c).

If the impairment or combination of impairments does not significantly limit physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, it is not a severe impairment(s) and disability does not exist. Age, education and work experience will not be considered. 20 CFR 416.920.

Statements about pain or other symptoms do not alone establish disability. There must be medical signs and laboratory findings which demonstrate a medical impairment... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

...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).

In determining disability under the law, the ability to work is measured. An individual's functional capacity for doing basic work activities is evaluated. If an individual has the ability to perform basic work activities without significant limitations, he or she is not considered disabled. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(iv).

Basic work activities are 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).

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

Medical evidence 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 the impairment(s), including your symptoms, diagnosis and prognosis, what an individual can do despite impairment(s), and the physical or mental restrictions. 20 CFR 416.927(a)(2).

All of the evidence relevant to the claim, including medical opinions, is reviewed and findings are made. 20 CFR 416.927(c).

The Administrative Law Judge is responsible for making the determination or decision about whether the statutory definition of disability is met. The Administrative Law Judge reviews all medical findings and other evidence that support a medical source's statement of disability.... 20 CFR 416.927(e).

A statement by a medical source finding that an individual is "disabled" or "unable to work" does not mean that disability exists for the purposes of the program. 20 CFR 416.927(e).

When determining disability, the federal regulations require that several considerations be analyzed in sequential order. If disability can be ruled out at any step, analysis of the next step is not required. These steps are:

1. Does the client perform Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)? If yes, the client is ineligible for MA. If no, the analysis continues to Step 2. 20 CFR 416.920(b).

2. Does the client have a severe impairment that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more or result in death? If no, the client is ineligible for MA. If yes, the analysis continues to Step 3. 20 CFR 416.920(c).
3. Does the impairment appear on a special listing of impairments or are the client's symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings at least equivalent in severity to the set of medical findings specified for the listed impairment? If no, the analysis continues to Step 4. If yes, MA is approved. 20 CFR 416.290(d).
4. Can the client do the former work that he/she performed within the last 15 years? If yes, the client is ineligible for MA. If no, the analysis continues to Step 5. 20 CFR 416.920(e).
5. Does the client have the Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) to perform other work according to the guidelines set forth at 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Sections 200.00-204.00? If yes, the analysis ends and the client is ineligible for MA. If no, MA is approved. 20 CFR 416.920(f).

Claimant has the burden of proof to show by a preponderance of the medical evidence in the record that his physical impairments meet the department's definition of disability for MA-P purposes. PEM 260. "Disability," as defined by MA-P standards is a legal term which is individually determined by consideration of all factors in each particular case.

STEP 1

The issue at Step 1 is whether claimant is performing Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA). If claimant is working and is earning substantial income; he is not eligible for MA-P.

SGA is defined as the performance of significant duties over a reasonable period of time for pay. Claimant's who are working and performing Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) are not disabled regardless of medical condition, age, education or work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(b)

The medical/vocational evidence shows that claimant is not currently performing SGA.

Therefore, claimant meets the Step 1 disability requirements.

STEP 2

The issue at Step 2 is whether claimant has impairments which meet the SSI definition of severity/duration.

Unless an impairment is expected to result in death, it must have lasted or be expected to last for a continuous period of least 12 months. 20 CFR 416.909.

Also, to qualify for MA-P claimant must satisfy both the gainful work and the duration criteria. 20 CFR 416.920(a).

Since the State Disability requirement is a *de minimus* requirement, claimant meets Step 2.

STEP 3

The issue at Step 3 is whether claimant meets the Listing of Impairments in the SSI regulations. Claimant does not allege disability based on the Listings.

Therefore, claimant does not meet the Step 3 disability requirements.

STEP 4

The issue at Step 4 is whether claimant is able to do his previous work. Claimant previously worked as a welder.

Claimant's previous work as a welder may be classified as follows:

Medium work. Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds.

The medical/vocational evidence of record shows that claimant is not able to meet the lifting and standing requirements of his previous job as a welder.

Therefore, claimant meets the Step 4 disability requirements.

STEP 5

The issue at Step 5 is whether claimant has the Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) to do other work. For purposes of this analysis, we classify jobs as sedentary, light, medium and heavy. These terms are defined in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* published by the US Department of Labor at 20 CFR 416.967.

The medical/vocational evidence of record, taken as a whole, establishes that claimant is able to do unskilled sedentary work. Claimant's vocational profile shows a younger individual (age 45) with a high school education and a history of semi-skilled work as a welder. Based on this analysis, claimant is able to work as a carry-out clerk and bagger at a grocery store, as a ticket taker for a theatre, as a parking lot attendant, and as a greeter for [REDACTED]t.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that claimant does not meet the MA-P disability requirements under PEM 260. Claimant is not disabled for MA-P purposes, based on Step 5 of the sequential analysis as described above.

Accordingly, the department's denial of claimant's MA-P application is, hereby,
AFFIRMED.

/s/

Jay W. Sexton
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: February 9, 2009

Date Mailed: February 10, 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 receipt 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.

JWS/sd

cc:

