

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: 2007-30819
Issue No: 2009; 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
February 12, 2008
Jackson 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 Tuesday, February 12, 2008. The claimant personally appeared, but the claimant's attorney was not present and Notice of Hearing was returned.

ISSUE

Did the department properly deny the claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P) 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 August 3, 2007, the claimant applied for MA-P and SDA without filing an application for retroactive MA-P.

(2) On September 11, 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 past relevant work and for SDA that the claimant's physical and mental impairment does not prevent employment for 90 days or more.

(3) On September 13, 2007, the department caseworker sent the claimant a notice that her application was denied.

(4) On September 17, 2007, the department received a hearing request from the claimant, contesting the department's negative action.

(5) On January 7, 2008, 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:

It is noted that the claimant had her Social Security hearing on September 21, 2007 and the ALJ denied her Social Security and SSI disability benefits on November 27, 2007. The claimant has chronic pain without significant objective abnormal findings. She had diffuse tenderness and diffuse pain without significant neurological abnormalities. Her mental status exam was basically within normal limits. The claimant's treating physician has given less than sedentary work restrictions based on the claimant's physical impairments. However, this Medical Source Opinion (MSO) is inconsistent with the great weight of the objective medical evidence and per 20 CFR 416.927(c)(2)(3)(4) and 20 CFR 416.927(d)(3)(4)(5), will not be given controlling weight. The collective objective medical evidence shows that the claimant is capable of performing simple, unskilled, medium 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, medium work. If lieu of detailed work history, the claimant will be returned to other work. Therefore, based on the claimant's vocational profile (younger individual, high school education, and an unskilled work history), MA-P is denied using Vocational Rule 203.28 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 February 12, 2008, 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 February 20, 2008 and forwarded to SHRT for review on February 29, 2008.

(7) On March 6, 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:

It is noted that the claimant had a Social Security hearing on September 21, 2007 and the ALJ denied her Social Security and SSI disability benefits on November 27, 2007. However, the appeals council returned the case to the ALJ on February 6, 2008. The claimant has chronic pain without significant objective abnormal findings. She had diffuse tenderness and diffuse pain without significant neurological abnormalities. Her mental status exam was basically within normal limits. The claimant's treating physician has given less than sedentary work restrictions based on the claimant's physical impairments. However, this Medical Source Opinion (MSO) is inconsistent with the great weight of the objective medical evidence and per 20 CFR 416.927(c)(2)(3)(4) and 20 CFR 416.927(d)(3)(4)(5), will not be given controlling weight. The collective objective medical evidence shows that the claimant is capable of performing 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. If lieu of detailed work history, the claimant will be returned to other work. Therefore, based on the claimant's vocational profile (younger individual, high school education, and an unskilled work history), MA-P is denied using Vocational Rule 203.28 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 44 year-old woman whose date of birth is [REDACTED]. The claimant is 5' 3" tall and weighs 170 pounds. The claimant has gained 20 pounds in the past year because she is not physically active. The claimant has a GED where she was special education in reading and math. The claimant stated that she can read and write and do basic math. The claimant was last employed as a porter in August 2004. The claimant has also been employed as an assembler and forklift operator.

(9) The claimant's alleged impairments are herniated disc, spinal fusion, fibromyalgia, panic attacks, and joint, back and neck pain.

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 a 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 and has not worked since August 2004. 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 (6th 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 was seen by the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with a chief complaint of back pain, neck pain, and generalized pain. The treating pain consultant stressed to the claimant the importance of gradual stretching exercises and some increased physical activity. The claimant does have some difficulty with this due to the current pathology in her back and neck. Warm water aerobics was recommended to assist her with maintaining as much as activity as possible. The claimant was suggested that she contact [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to get involved in the mental health system since she does agree that she has a fairly significant physiological component to her pain. Currently, the claimant’s pain is so generalized that interventional therapy would be unlikely to be effective. However, if the claimant is able to localize her pain more with the aid of some psychological support and improvement in her fibromyalgia symptoms, the claimant would be a candidate for interventional therapy for her neck and her back. The claimant had a normal physical examination where she was alert and oriented x3. The claimant had difficulty with heel walking, toe walking, and squatting due to pain. The claimant’s gait was within normal limits. Cervically, the claimant had decreased range of motion. She was acutely tender to even light palpitation throughout the cervical, thoracic, lumbar spine, and in the associated paraspinal muscles. The claimant was tender even to light

palpitation throughout the fibromyalgia tender points. The claimant had decreased range of motion of the lumbar spine and declined to attempt forward flexion past 20/30 degrees and declined to attempt any extension. The claimant stated that seated leg raises to 90 degrees on the left and right produced a pulling sensation in the back of her legs and in her back and buttocks. Supine leg raises to 20/30 degrees on the leg and right also produced pulling tightness in her back and buttocks. Patrick's procedure produced tightness in her hips and back bilaterally. The treating pain specialist's impression was chronic low back and bilateral leg pain. Degenerative disc disease with herniated disc at L3-L4 and T11-T12, status post cervical spine fusion from [REDACTED] with spondylosis at multiple levels and neuroforaminal stenosis at C6-C7 and C4-C5, fibromyalgia, and psychosocial factors effecting physical condition. (Department Exhibit 44-48)

On [REDACTED], the claimant's treating physician completed a Medical Examination Report, for the claimant. The claimant was first examined on [REDACTED] and last examined on [REDACTED]. The claimant had a history of impairment and chief complaint and current diagnosis of chronic low back pain, radiculopathy of left leg, H&P of the L3-L4, right knee osteoarthritis, chronic S/P fusion, and SVT. The claimant had a normal physical examination. Musculoskeletally, the claimant's treating physician noted that she had an antalgic gait with right knee medial JLT, negative for SLR, decreased range of motion, and flexion at 45 degrees. (Department Exhibit 7)

The treating physician's clinical impression was the claimant was deteriorating with limitations that were expected to last more than 90 days. The claimant could never lift any weight and stand and/or walk for less than two hours of an eight hour workday. There were no assistive devices medically required or needed for ambulation. The claimant could use both hands/arms for simple grasping and fine manipulation, but neither hand/arms for reaching and

pushing/pulling. The claimant could use neither feet/legs for operating foot/leg controls. The medical findings that support the above physical limitations were severe pain in the lower back region with pushing/pulling/reaching, and walking. The claimant had no mental limitation and she could meet her needs in the home. (Department Exhibit 8)

On [REDACTED], the claimant's treating psychiatrist completed a psychiatric/psychological examination report for the claimant. The claimant was given a diagnosis of panic disorder, depressive disorder, and chronic pain. The claimant was given a GAF of 50 compared to a GAF of 45 last year. In addition, the claimant could manage her benefit funds. The claimant's mental status examination was negative for psychosis or other disturbance of thoughts. Sensorium was intact. Memory and concentration was moderately affected by pain/physical discomfort. The claimant reports difficulty maintaining focus for long periods of time due to constant physical pain. The claimant is able to function normally, but when the pain is bad the claimant is irritable. The claimant takes several breaks during the day to relieve the pain. (Department Exhibit 25-26)

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence in the record indicates that the claimant has established that she has a severe impairment. On [REDACTED], the claimant's physician diagnosed her with osteoarthritis in the right knee and chronic low back pain. Psychologically, she was diagnosed with panic disorder, depressive disorder, and chronic pain disorder on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] by her treating physician. 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 have a driver's license and does drive with no problems; however, when she has a panic attack she has to pull over. The claimant does cook mostly in microwave because she has a hard time standing. The claimant does grocery shop with her son when she is physically able when and she has to sit down where they grocery shop once or twice a month. The claimant does clean her own home by making her bed, vacuuming, laundry, and sweeping. The claimant doesn't do any outside work. Her hobbies are watching TV and music. The claimant felt that her condition has worsened in the past year because the pain is unbearable. The claimant stated that she is mentally impaired by panic attacks where she is currently taking medication and in therapy.

The claimant wakes up at 5:00 a.m. She takes awhile to get up. She takes her medications. She showers and dresses. She uses a heating pad. She tries to get some fresh air. She goes to bed between 7:30 to 8:00 p.m.

The claimant felt that she could walk one block. The longest she felt she could stand was 10 minutes. The longest she felt she could sit was 30 minutes. The heaviest weight she felt she could carry was 5-7 pounds. The claimant stated that her level of pain on a scale of 1 to 10 without medication was a 10+ that decreases to a 4 with medication. The claimant smokes a half a pack of cigarettes a day. She stopped drinking years ago where she would drink one or two beers. The claimant does not or has ever taken any illegal or illicit drugs. The claimant stated that there was no work that she thought she could do.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant has established that she cannot perform any of her prior work. The claimant was previously employed as a porter, assembler, and forklift operator. These positions would require excessive standing, stooping, and bending which with the claimant's low back pain and osteoarthritis in the right knee would prove difficult for her to perform. However, the claimant should be able to perform light work. Therefore, the claimant is 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 her 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 she lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in her previous employment or that she

is physically unable to do any tasks demanded of her. The claimant's testimony as to her limitation indicates her 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 she has panic attacks where she is currently taking medication and in therapy. The claimant's treating physician on August 20, 2007 stated that the claimant had no mental limitation. The [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] suggested that she go back to therapy at [REDACTED] to localize her pain. The claimant's psychiatrist on [REDACTED] diagnosed the claimant with panic disorder, depressive disorder, and chronic pain disorder. She was given a GAF of 50 compared to a 45 last year. A GAF of 50 shows serious symptoms or any serious impairment in social, occupational, or school functioning. As a result, there is sufficient medical evidence of a mental impairment that is so severe that it would prevent the claimant from working at a skilled, detailed job, 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 high school equivalent education and an unskilled work history, who is limited to light work, is not considered disabled. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Rule 202.20. The Medical-Vocational guidelines are not strictly applied with non-exertional impairments such as panic disorder, depressive disorder, and chronic pain 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 15, 2009

Date Mailed: May 18, 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.

CGF/vmc

cc:

