

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: 2008-13171
Issue No: 2009
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
June 24, 2008
Lapeer County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Jana A. Bachman

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, an in-person hearing was held on June 24, 2008. Claimant was represented by [REDACTED]. Claimant did not appear at hearing.

ISSUE

Whether claimant has established disability for Medical Assistance (MA).

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

- (1) August 2, 2007, claimant applied for MA and retroactive MA.

(2) October 19, 2007, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied claimant's application. Department Exhibit A.

(3) October 23, 2007, the department sent claimant written notice that the application was denied.

(4) January 15, 2008, the department received claimant's timely request for hearing.

(5) April 17, 2008, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) denied claimant's application. Department Exhibit B.

(6) June 24, 2008, the in-person hearing was held. Claimant did not appear at hearing. Prior to the close of the record, claimant's representative requested the record be extended for additional medical evidence. Claimant's representative waived the right to a timely hearing decision. March 16, 2009, after review of all medial evidence, the SHRT again denied claimant's application. SHRT Decision, 3-16-09.

(7) Claimant asserts disability based on impairments caused by bipolar disorder, memory impairment, anxiety, panic attacks, substance abuse, shortness of breath, and heart disease.

(8) Claimant is 42 years old, 5'7" tall, and weighs 150 pounds. Claimant completed high school and two years of college.

(9) It is unclear as to whether claimant is engaged in substantial gainful activity. No work history was available.

(10) During 2006 and 2007, claimant was hospitalized a number of times due to suicidal ideation, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and alcohol-related physical problems. Department Exhibit A, pgs 36-126.

(11) October 2006, claimant underwent a psychiatric evaluation and testing. A report was prepared that indicates Axis I diagnoses of bipolar disorder recurrent major depressive episodes with hypomanic episodes; alcohol abuse; and schizoaffective disorder (bipolar type). During exam, claimant indicates that she has a history of multiple suicide attempts. She abuses medication and alcohol. Department Exhibit A, pgs 43-48. October 9, 2007, claimant again underwent a psychiatric evaluation. A narrative report was prepared that indicates Axis I diagnoses of bipolar II disorder; alcohol abuse; and panic disorder without agoraphobia. Mental status was as follows: claimant appeared comfortable and relaxed during exam. She did not exhibit any atypical or unusual body movements. She appeared open, motivated, and cooperative. She was initially somewhat low and lethargic, but affect gradually improved as rapport was established. She denied experiencing visual or auditory hallucinations or delusions of any kind. Patient exhibited moderate short-term memory problems, including problems focusing and staying on tasks for extended periods. She did not have problems organizing her thoughts or the dates of important events. Patient continues to utilize an obsessive, impulsive and inductive coping style. Patient reports being phobic of groups and unfamiliar public places. She continues to experience suicidal thoughts. Intelligence is estimated as being average. Patient was oriented x 3. Claimant reports she continues to drink alcohol but has greatly reduced the amount. GAF was assessed at 45. Department Exhibit A, pgs 4-9. January 25, 2008, claimant's psychiatrist completed a psychiatric/psychological examination report following exam that took place on that same date. Axis I diagnosis included alcohol abuse. Claimant Exhibit A, pgs 9-10.

(11) July 1, 2008, claimant was admitted to hospital. Discharge diagnosis included chronic alcoholism. Claimant Exhibit A, pgs 9-10.

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 400.10, *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 do 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).

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).

If an individual fails to cooperate by appearing for a physical or mental examination by a certain date without good cause, there will not be a finding of disability. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(4)(ii).

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).

At Step 1, it is unknown whether claimant is engaged in substantial gainful activity.

Accordingly, a Step 1 analysis cannot be completed. Finding of Fact 9.

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence of record indicates that claimant has a long history of serious mental illness. Mental illness appears to be exacerbated by claimant's chronic alcoholism and drug abuse. At hearing, claimant's representative testified that claimant had been sober for one year. This testimony is not consistent with the objective medical evidence of record that indicates claimant reports continuing to consume alcohol and was treated in hospital during July 2008 for alcoholism. Finding of Fact 10-11.

Public Law 104-121 states that no finding of disability shall be made where drug and/or substance abuse is a material causative factor in the claimant's asserted disability. As discussed above, claimant has long history of alcohol and substance abuse. Her Axis I diagnosis includes alcohol abuse. Accordingly, alcohol and drug abuse are material causative factors in the claimant's asserted disability and no finding of disability will be made.

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence of record is not sufficient to establish that claimant has severe impairments that have lasted or are expected to last 12 months or more and prevent all employment at any job for 12 months or more. Accordingly, claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 2.

At Step 3, claimant's impairments do not rise to the level necessary to be specifically disabling by law. Public Law 104-121 is cited as at Step 2 above.

At Step 4, claimant's work history is unknown. Accordingly, a Step 4 analysis cannot be completed. Finding of Fact 8-9.

The residual functional capacity is what an individual can do despite limitations. All impairments will be considered in addition to ability to meet certain demands of jobs in the national economy. Physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements and other functions will be evaluated.... 20 CFR 416.945(a).

To determine the physical demands (exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, we classify jobs as sedentary, light, medium and 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).

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. If someone can do medium work, we determine that he or she can also do sedentary and light work. 20 CFR 416.967(c).

Heavy work. Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. If someone can do heavy work, we determine that he or she can also do medium, light, and sedentary work. 20 CFR 416.967(d).

At Step 5, claimant has a non-exertional impairment: mental illness and polysubstance abuse. See discussion at Step 2 above. Finding of Fact 10-11. Public Law 104-121 is cited as at Step 2 above.

At Step 5, the objective medical evidence of record is sufficient to establish that claimant is capable of performing work activities. Accordingly, claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 5.

Claimant does not meet the federal statutory requirements to qualify for disability. Therefore, claimant does not meet the disability requirements to qualify for Medical Assistance based on disability and the department properly denied the application.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides claimant has not established disability for Medical Assistance.

Accordingly, the department's aciton is, hereby, UPHELD.

/s/

Jana A. Bachman
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: May 20, 2010

Date Mailed: May 25, 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 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.

JAB/db

cc:

