

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: 2008-18772

Issue No: 2009/4031

Case No: [REDACTED]

Load No: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date:

July 8, 2008

Ingham County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Marlene B. Magyar

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 July 8, 2008. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

ISSUE

Did the department properly determine claimant is not disabled by Medicaid (MA) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) eligibility standards?

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 divorced, 55-year-old nonsmoker/nondrinker with a high school education who is also certified as a home health aide.

(2) Claimant was last employed in home health care (medium exertional activity) between March and November 2007, but she has remained unemployed since then.

(3) In November 2007, claimant was hospitalized secondary to fatigue, excessive thirst, vaginal bleeding, abdominal pain and back pain (Department Exhibit #3, pg 49).

(4) Claimant was diagnosed with uterine fibroids; consequently, she needed an emergency hysterectomy, after which, she developed postoperative left leg deep vein thrombosis (DVT) treated conservatively with [REDACTED] daily at discharge (Department Exhibit #3, pg 51).

(5) During this hospitalization, claimant also was diagnosed with new onset diabetes mellitus, now adequately controlled with oral medication ([REDACTED]).

(6) Claimant stands approximately 5'10" tall and is morbidly obese at approximately 260 pounds (BMI=37.3); she is left hand dominant.

(7) Claimant is independent in basic daily living activities and she needs no assistance with her personal cares; additionally, she has a valid driver's license and access to a roadworthy vehicle.

(8) Claimant currently resides with her friend in Ingham County, Michigan.

(9) Claimant's hobbies include visiting friends, watching television and helping create crafts and transport/set-up at craft shows once or twice monthly (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 9, 10 and 14).

(10) In July 2008 claimant had a left knee MRI scan which identified: (1) several small ganglion cysts near the posterior superior margin of her knee joint capsule; (2) moderate to severe medial tricompartmental arthritis with likely degenerative tears in claimant's left medial meniscus; (3) loose bodies within the posterior recess of claimant's knee joint; and (4) mild, diffuse subcutaneous swelling of that knee joint (Department Exhibit #3, pgs 14 and 15).

(11) As of claimant's July 8, 2008 disability hearing date, she was taking a water pill ( [REDACTED] ) to assist with swelling control.

(12) In August 2008, claimant underwent an independent physical examination (Department Exhibit #3, pgs 1-3).

(13) The range of motion in all claimant's joints was normal, except for decreased flexion and extension in her left knee; no cyanosis, clubbing or swelling was noted in either lower extremity and claimant's peripheral pulses were good when palpated (Department Exhibit #3, pg 2).

(14) Claimant was noted to ambulate with an antalgic gait using a cane in her non-dominant hand; no other physical abnormalities were noted (Department Exhibit #3, pgs 1-3).

#### 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).

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).

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

The SDA program differs from the federal MA regulations in that the durational requirement is 90 days. This means that the person's impairments must meet the SSI disability standards for 90 days in order for that person to be eligible for SDA benefits.

The person claiming a physical or mental disability has the burden to establish it through the use of competent medical evidence from qualified medical sources such as his or her medical history, clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescribed treatment, prognosis for recovery and/or medical assessment of ability to do work-related activities or ability to reason and to make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is being alleged, 20 CFR 416.913. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.908 and 20 CFR 416.929. By the same token, a conclusory statement by a physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind is not sufficient without supporting medical evidence to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.929.

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).

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.

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).

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).

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).

If an individual fails to follow prescribed treatment which would be expected to restore their ability to engage in substantial gainful activity without good cause, there will not be a finding of disability.... 20 CFR 416.994(b)(4)(iv).

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 is not disqualified from receiving MA/SDA at Step 1 because she has not been gainfully employed since she was hospitalized in November 2007.

At Step 2, claimant's diagnosed left knee impairments have left her with some range of motion limitations and pain. However, claimant's other physical impairments (DVT and non-insulin dependent diabetes) are well controlled with current medications. Furthermore, no mental impairments have been alleged or shown.

It must be noted the law does not require an applicant to be completely symptom free before a finding of lack of disability can be rendered. In fact, if an applicant's symptoms can be managed to the point where substantial gainful employment can be achieved, a finding of not disabled must be rendered. Nevertheless, claimant's medically managed, documented physical impairments do meet the *de minimus* level of severity and duration required for further analysis.

At Step 3, the medical evidence on this record does not support a finding that claimant's diagnosed impairments, standing alone or combined, are severe enough to meet or equal any specific listed impairments; consequently, the analysis must continue.

At Step 4, the record supports claimant's contention she is incapable of returning to the physically demanding job duties associated with personal patient care. As such, this analysis must continue.

At Step 5, an individual's age, education and previous work experience (vocational factors) must be assessed in light of the documented impairments. Claimant is 55 years old with certified training in home health care and a history of semi-skilled work in that area.



Consequently, at Step 5, this Administrative Law Judge finds, from the medical evidence of record, that claimant is not disabled pursuant to Medical-Vocational Rule 202.05.

Claimant's biggest barrier to employability appears to be her displacement from her longstanding career, in combination with her lack of recent connection to the competitive work force. Claimant should be referred to [REDACTED] for assistance with job training and/or placement consistent with her skills, interests and abilities.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the department properly determined claimant is not disabled by MA/SDA eligibility standards.

Accordingly, the department's action is AFFIRMED.

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
Marlene B. Magyar  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Ismael Ahmed, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: August 24, 2009

Date Mailed: August 25, 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.

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cc:

