

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: 2008-21376
Issue No: 2009;4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
August 7, 2008
Alcona 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 Harrisville on August 7, 2008. Claimant personally appeared and testified under oath.

The department was represented by Vicki Dahl (FIM).

The Administrative Law Judge appeared by telephone from Lansing.

ISSUES

- (1) Did claimant establish a severe mental impairment expected to preclude her from substantial gainful work, **continuously**, for one year (MA-P) or 90 days (SDA)?
- (2) Did claimant establish a severe physical impairment expected to preclude her from substantial gainful work, **continuously**, for one year (MA-P) or 90 days (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) Claimant is an MA-P/SDA applicant (March 6, 2008) who was denied by SHRT (June 12, 2008) due to claimant's ability to perform her past work (light work).

(2) Claimant's vocational factors are: age—44; education—high school diploma; post high school education—none; work experience—dishwasher at a restaurant, crew member (kitchen and counter) at [REDACTED], assembly work for a temp agency.

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

- (a) A bad left knee;
- (b) Poor grip in both hands;
- (c) Pinched nerve in left elbow.

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

OBJECTIVE MEDICAL EVIDENCE (June 12, 2008)

The department denied MA-P/SDA based on claimant's ability to perform her past light work as a cashier.

(5) Claimant lives with her husband, and performs the following Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): dressing, bathing, cooking, dish washing, light cleaning, mopping (sometimes), vacuuming (sometimes), laundry and grocery shopping. Claimant has not been hospitalized recently. She does not use a cane, a walker, a wheelchair or a shower stool. She does not wear a brace on her neck. She does wear an ace bandage on her left knee.

(6) Claimant has a valid driver's license and drives an automobile approximately 12 times a month. Claimant is computer literate.

(7) The following medical records are persuasive:

- (a) A [REDACTED] report (EMG) was reviewed.

The physician provided the following history:

Claimant reports she has been having problems over the last several months with numbness and tingling to her left hand. She also had previous issues with her right hand. She admits to occasional neck pain, but nothing really shoots or radiates down the arms. She describes more of a numbness and tingling in the left hand, primarily at the third, fourth, and fifth fingers. This is present constantly. There is nothing in particular that makes it worse. There is weakness in her grip as well.

The physician provided the following impressions:

- (1) Left hand numbness, pain and weakness;
- (2) Neck pain;
- (3) Abnormal study;
- (4) There was electrodiagnostic evidence to date consistent with a left ulnar neuropathy at the elbow;
- (5) There was no electrodiagnostic evidence for (a) left carpal tunnel syndrome or (b) left cervical radiculopathy.

- (b) An [REDACTED] report was reviewed. The OB-GYN physician saw her regarding her menometrorrhagia and fibroid uterus.

The OB-GYN provided the following impressions:

- (1) Menometrorrhagia;
- (2) Dysmenorrhea;
- (3) Fibroid uterus;
- (4) Medical history of hypertension; gird and depression.

- (c) A March 17, 2007 medical examination report (DHS-49) was reviewed.

The physician provided the following current diagnoses:

- (1) Diabetes;

(2) Hypertension and dislipodemia.

The physician reported the following functional limitations:

Claimant is able to lift 12 pounds frequently and 25 pounds occasionally. There are no restrictions on claimant's ability to stand, walk or sit. Claimant is able to do simple grasping, reaching, pushing-pulling with both hands. Unable to do fine manipulating with either hand. Claimant has normal use of her feet/legs.

(8) The probative medical evidence does not establish an acute (non-exertional) mental condition expected to prevent claimant from performing all customary work functions for the required period of time. Claimant does not allege a mental impairment as the basis for disability.

(9) The probative medical evidence does not establish an acute (exertional) physical impairment expected to prevent claimant from performing all customary work functions for the required period of time. The medical records do show the following diagnoses: left hand numbness, pain and weakness; neck pain; left ulnar neuropathy, diabetes type II, hypertension and dislipodemia. The medical reports state that claimant has the ability to lift 20 pounds frequently and 25 pounds occasionally. She has no limitations on her abilities to stand, walk or sit. She is able to use her hands/arms normally except that she cannot perform fine manipulating. She is able to use her legs/feet normally.

(10) Claimant has applied for federal disability benefits with the Social Security Administration. Social Security denied her application; claimant filed a timely appeal.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

CLAIMANT'S POSITION

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

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The department thinks that claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform her past work (light work).

LEGAL BASE

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

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).

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 her mental/physical impairments meet the department's definition of disability for MA-P/SDA purposes. PEM 260/261. "Disability" as defined by MA-P/SDA standards is a legal term which is individually determined by a 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, she is not eligible for MA-P/SDA.

SGA is defined as the performance of significant duties over a reasonable period of time for pay. Claimants who are working, or otherwise 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 of record shows that claimant is not currently performing SGA.

Therefore, claimant meets the Step 1 disability test.

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 at least 12 months. 20 CFR 416.909.

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

If claimant does not have an impairment or combination of impairments which profoundly limit her physical/mental ability to do basic work activities, she does not meet the Step 2 criteria.

Claimant meets the severity and duration eligibility test.

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 Listing.

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

STEP 4

The issue at Step 4 is whether claimant is able to do her previous work. Claimant previously worked as a dishwasher at a restaurant. Claimant's work as a dishwasher was light work.

Claimant has established that she has numbness in both hands. Therefore, she is not able to work as a dishwasher.

Since claimant is not able to return to her previous work as a dishwasher, she meets the Step 4 disability test.

STEP 5

The issue at Step 5 is whether claimant has the Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) to do other work. Claimant has the burden of proof to show by the medical/psychological evidence in the record that her mental/physical impairments meet the department's definition of disability for MA-P/SDA purposes.

First, claimant does not allege disability based on a mental impairment.

Second, claimant alleges disability based on numbness in her bilateral hands. The medical records do establish that claimant has a left ulnar neuropathy.

During the hearing, claimant testified that a major impediment to her return to work, in addition to her left neuropathy was left knee pain. Evidence of pain, alone, is insufficient to establish disability for MA-P/SDA purposes.

The Administrative Law Judge concludes that claimant's testimony about her pain is credible, but out of proportion to the objective medical evidence as it relates to claimant's ability to work. There is no recent medical evidence to establish a left knee impairment.

In summary, the Administrative Law Judge is not persuaded that claimant is totally unable to work based on her left ulnar dysfunction and left knee pain. Claimant currently

performs several Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and has an active social life with her husband. She is able to drive an automobile 12 times a month and is computer literate. Considering the entire medical record, in combination with claimant's testimony, the Administrative Law Judge concludes that claimant is able to perform unskilled sedentary work (SGA). Therefore, claimant is able to work as a ticket taker for a theater, as a parking lot attendant or as a greeter for [REDACTED].

The department correctly denied claimant's MA-P/SDA application based on Step 5 of the sequential analysis, as presented above.

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/SDA disability requirements under PEM 260/261.

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

SO ORDERED.

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

Date Signed: December 11, 2009

Date Mailed: December 11, 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.

JWS/vmc

cc:

