

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: 2008-22799
Issue No: 2009; 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
September 11, 2008
Newaygo 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 White Cloud on September 11, 2008. Claimant personally appeared and testified under oath.

The department was represented by Cheryl Babcock (Lead Worker).

The Administrative Law Judge appeared by telephone from Lansing.

Claimant requested additional time to submit new medical evidence. The new medical evidence was received and submitted to the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) on September 11, 2008. Claimant waived the timeliness requirements so that her new medical evidence could be reviewed by SHRT. After SHRT's second disability denial, the Administrative Law Judge made the final decision below.

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 (April 16, 2008) who was denied by SHRT (July 8, 2008) based on claimant's ability to do unskilled work. SHRT relied on Med-Voc Rule 204.00.

(2) Claimant's vocational factors are: age--46; education—high school diploma, post-high school education--none; work experience—stocker/cashier/janitor for [REDACTED] convenience store, server at [REDACTED] restaurant, and cashier at a gas station.

(3) Claimant has not performed Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) since 2003 when she worked as a stocker/cashier and janitor for [REDACTED]

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

- (a) Memory loss due to medications;
- (b) COPD;
- (c) Heart dysfunction;
- (d) Thyroid dysfunction;
- (e) Depression;
- (f) Anxiety;
- (g) Panic disorder.

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

OBJECTIVE MEDICAL EVIDENCE (JULY 8, 2008)

The department thinks that claimant's combined impairments (depression and anxiety) do not prevent claimant from performing unskilled work based on Med-Voc Rule 204.00.

* * *

(6) Claimant lives with a girl friend and performs the following Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): dressing, bathing, cooking, light cleaning, mopping, vacuuming and laundry. Claimant has not been hospitalized recently. Claimant does not use a cane, a walker, a wheelchair or a shower stool. She does not wear braces on her neck, arms or legs.

(7) Claimant has a valid [REDACTED] driver's license but does not drive an automobile. Claimant is not computer literate.

- (8) The following medical records are persuasive:

- (a) A [REDACTED] Summary was reviewed.

The limited license psychologist provided the following DSM diagnoses:

Axis I—Major depressive disorder, recurrent, severe without psychotic features; panic disorder with agoraphobia; generalized anxiety disorder.

The limited licensed psychologist provided the following Axis V/GAF score—intake/47 annual/54.

- (b) An [REDACTED] was reviewed.

The limited license psychologist provided the following Mental Status Report:

Claimant presents today depressed and concerned about her health and dental issues. She has applied for assistance through Medicaid and is waiting for a decision. She has an appointment scheduled with her PCP at 4/23/2008, and this therapist referred claimant to a dentist in Muskegon. It is questionable how much of her symptoms at this point are

related to medical concerns as there were some concerns with her blood work. Customer initially started attending [REDACTED] after her boyfriend died suddenly due to a problem with his heart, which she continues to struggle with; including flash-backs of the day that he died (multiple times every day). She has been living with her friend in [REDACTED]. She isolates herself at home, although she was isolating in her bedroom, she is tearful occasionally, although this has decreased and she continues not to do things that she used to like to do. She explained, "I get them out, like a puzzle, and then I just don't do it." She continues to have flash-backs of her boyfriend's death. She expressed symptoms of depression as well as anxiety (when around others or out of her room). She reports to always having difficulty with self esteem. This claimant has an impairment with sleep and appetite; feelings of hopelessness. No motivation.

* * *

(9) 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 testified that she has been diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder, recurrent/severe without psychotic features and with Panic Disorder/Agoraphobia and Generalized Anxiety Disorder. The [REDACTED] psychologist report in the record shows that claimant has a GAF diagnosis of 54. The limited license psychologist did not report any functional limitations due to claimant's mental impairments. Claimant did not provide a DHS-49D or DHS-49E to establish her mental residual functional capacity.

(10) 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. Claimant reported diagnoses of COPD, heart dysfunction, and memory loss (related to her meds). However, the medical records do not establish any functional limitations arising out of her physical impairments.

(11) Claimant recently 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 benefits 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 unskilled sedentary work.

The department denied MA-P/SDA benefits based on Med-Voc Rule 204.00.

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.

The department decides eligibility based on mental impairments using the following standards.

(a) **Activities of Daily Living.**

...Activities of daily living including adaptive activities such as cleaning, shopping, cooking, taking public transportation, paying bills, maintaining a residence, caring appropriately for one's grooming and hygiene, using telephones and directories, using a post office, etc. 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(C)(1).

(b) **Social Functions.**

...Social functioning refers to an individual's capacity to interact independently, appropriately, effectively, and on a sustained basis with other individuals. 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(C)(2).

Social functioning includes the ability to get along with others, such as family members, friends, neighbors, grocery clerks, landlords, or bus drivers. You may demonstrate impaired social functioning by, for example, a history of altercations, evictions, firings, fear of strangers, avoidance of interpersonal relationships, or social isolation. You may exhibit strength in social functioning by such things as your ability to initiate social contacts with others, communicate clearly with others, or interact and actively participate in group activities. We also need to consider cooperative behaviors, consideration for others, awareness of others' feelings, and social maturity. Social functioning in work situations may involve interactions with the public, responding appropriately to persons in authority (e.g., supervisors), or cooperative behaviors involving coworkers. 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(C)(2).

(c) **Concentration, persistence or pace.**

...Concentration, persistence or pace refers to the ability to sustain focused attention and concentration sufficiently long to permit the timely and appropriate completion of tasks commonly found in work settings. 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(C)(3).

Limitations in concentration, persistence, or pace are best observed in work settings, but may also be reflected by limitations in other settings. In addition, major limitations in this area can often be assessed through clinical examination or psychological testing. Wherever possible, however, a mental status examination or

psychological test data should be supplemented by other available evidence. 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(C)(3).

(d) **Sufficient Evidence.**

The evaluation of disability on the basis of a mental disorder requires sufficient evidence to: (1) establish the presence of a medically determinable mental impairment(s); (2) assess the degree of functional limitation the impairment(s) imposes; and (3) project the probable duration of the impairment(s). Medical evidence must be sufficiently complete and detailed as to symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings to permit an independent determination. In addition, we will consider information from other sources when we determine how the established impairment(s) affects your ability to function. We will consider all relevant evidence in your case record. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(D).

(e) **Chronic Mental Impairments.**

...Chronic Mental Impairments: Particular problems are often involved in evaluating mental impairments in individuals who have long histories of repeated hospitalizations or prolonged outpatient care with supportive therapy and medication. For instance, if you have chronic organic, psychotic, and affective disorders you may commonly have your life structured in such a way as to minimize your stress and reduce your signs and symptoms.... 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(E).

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 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 that profoundly limit her physical/mental ability to do basic work activities, she does not meet the Step 2 criteria.

Under the *de minimus* rule, claimant meets the severity and duration requirements.

However, in order to qualify for disability based on MA-P/SDA, claimant must establish impairments which clearly show that claimant is unable to perform any work activities.

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.

SHRT evaluated claimant's eligibility using Listings 12.04 and 12.06. Claimant does not meet the requirements for either of these Listings.

STEP 4

The issue at Step 4 is whether claimant is able to do her previous work. Claimant previously worked as a cashier/stocker and janitor at a [REDACTED] convenience store.

Claimant's work at the [REDACTED] store involved medium work (stocking, sweeping) as well as sedentary work (operating cash register). Also, claimant was required to meet and assist customers to obtain the items which they wished to purchase.

Although claimant alleges that she is unable to work based on mental impairments (depression, anxiety and panic disorder), the medical records provided by the [REDACTED]

■■■■ limited license psychologist do not report any functional limitations that would impair claimant's ability to perform her previous work as a cashier/stocker/maintenance person at a grocery store. The ■■■■ records show a GAF score of 54 (moderate symptoms).

Therefore, claimant has not met her burden of proof to establish that she is unable to return to work.

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 alleges disability based on depression, panic disorder and anxiety disorder. The psychological evidence provided by the limited license psychologist does not show that claimant is totally unable to perform any work activities. Furthermore, claimant did not submit a DHS-49D or a DHS-49E to establish her mental residual functional capacity. Claimant is not entitled to MA-P/SDA disability based on her mental impairments.

Second, claimant alleges disability based on her COPD, heart dysfunction and memory loss due to medications. There is no medical evidence in the record to show that these physical impairments severely limit claimant's ability to function and would preclude her from working.

In short, the Administrative Law Judge is not persuaded that claimant is totally unable to work based on her COPD, heart dysfunction and short term memory loss.

Claimant currently performs an extensive list of activities of daily living, and has an active social life with her live-in partner. Considering the entire medical record, in combination with claimant's testimony, the Administrative Law Judge concludes that claimant is able to

perform simple, unskilled sedentary work (SGA). In this capacity, she is able to work as a ticket taker for a theatre, 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: August 12, 2009

Date Mailed: August 12, 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 mailing date of the rehearing decision.

JWS/sd

cc:

