

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: 2008-23461
Issue No: 2009; 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
October 1, 2008
Wayne 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 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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 (September 17, 2007) who was denied by SHRT (July 11, 2008) due to claimant's failure to establish an impairment which meets the severity and duration requirements.

(2) [REDACTED]

(3) Claimant has not performed Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) since 2000 when she worked as a home health aide at an adult assisted living home.

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

- (a) Unable to walk for long distances;
- (b) Right-sided pain;
- (c) Right hip pain;
- (d) Back pain;
- (e) Bilateral numbness in the arms;
- (f) Shortness of breath.

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

OBJECTIVE MEDICAL EVIDENCE (July 11, 2008)

Claimant is able to perform normal work activities, based on the medical evidence of record.

Claimant's eligibility under the following Listings was considered and denied: 12.04; 12.06; 12.08; 1.02 and 1.04.

(6) Claimant lives with her 19-year-old son, and performs the following Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): dressing, bathing, cooking (needs help), dish washing (needs help), laundry (needs help), and grocery shopping (needs help). Claimant was not hospitalized in 2008. Claimant uses a cane approximately 30 times a month. She uses a walker approximately 4 times

a month and wears a right leg brace approximately 5 times a month. Claimant does not use a walker or a shower stool.

(7) Claimant does not have a valid driver's license and does not drive an automobile.

Claimant is not computer literate. Claimant's mother drove her to the hearing.

(8) The following medical/psychological records are persuasive:

(a) An April 1, 2008 consultative psychiatric report was reviewed.

The psychiatrist provided the following history:

[REDACTED]
depression and family problems.' Claimant stated that she has been feeling depressed on and off since she was 13 years of age. She stated her parents got divorced when she was 13 years of age. She stated that when she is depressed, she does not want to do anything. She stays at home and does not go out. She cries sometimes. She stated that she attempted suicide once when she was 13 years old. She has poor concentration. She feels tired and exhausted. She does not socialize much. She states that she gets along fairly well with others. She does not argue or get into fights with others. She is not working at the present time. She denies any manic or hypomanic episodes. She denies any psychotic symptoms. She is sleeping excessively. Her appetite is fair and she has gained some weight recently.

The psychiatrist provided the following DSM diagnosis:

AXIS I--dysthymic disorder.

AXIS V/GAF--60.

The psychiatrist did not note any functional limitations based on his examination.

(b) A March 31, 2008 internal medicine consultative report was reviewed.

The internist provided the following history:

Claimant states that she has had back pain since her early teen years. She does not know what caused it. Claimant

stated that she was in an auto accident, but does not remember when. Her back pain got worse after this and kept getting worse over the years. She was evaluated by different doctors and given different opinions, but she was told that her back was messed up and she possibly has disc problems. She kept saying 'I don't know.'

Currently, claimant has pain in the entire back which is sharp and intermittent, radiating to the right buttock and lower extremity. She has stiffness in these areas. She denies any numbness or tingling. She admits to weakness in the lower extremity.

Physical examination:

[REDACTED] who is alert, oriented, not fully cooperative and coherent. She was exhibiting exaggerated pain behavior. She is not in any acute distress.

Clinical impression:

History of chronic back pain, diagnosis not established. Now claimant presents with chronic radicular back pain with no definite objective findings on today's exam.

(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 did not allege a mental impairment as the basis for disability. Claimant did provide a psychiatric report. The psychiatrist provided the following DSM diagnosis: dysthymic disorder; Axis V/GAF--60. The psychologist did not report any functional limitations based on claimant's mental status.

(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 alleged body pain, right hip pain, back pain, and bilateral arm pain as the basis for her disability. The consulting physician provided the following diagnoses:

history of chronic back pain, diagnosis is not established; now the patient presents with chronic radicular back pain, with no definite objective findings on today's exam.

(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 based on the impairments listed in paragraph #4, above.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The department thinks that claimant did not provide medical evidence to establish a severe condition which totally precludes substantial gainful activity. The department reviewed Listings 12.04, 12.06, 12.08 and 1.02 and 1.04 and determined that claimant does not meet any of these listings.

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).

To determine how a severe mental impairment effects claimant's ability to work, the following regulations must be considered:

(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 Functioning.**

...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).

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).

The severity/duration requirement is a *de minimus* requirement.

Therefore, claimant meets the severity and duration disability 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 Listings.

The following Listings were considered as a basis for claimant's claim of disability: 12.04, 12.06, 12.08 and 1.02, and 1.04. Claimant does not meet any of these Listings.

STEP 4

The issue at Step 4 is whether the claimant is able to do her previous work. Claimant previously worked as a home health aide at an adult assisted living home.

There is no medical evidence to establish that claimant is no longer able to do her work as a home health provider.

There is no medical evidence of a mental impairment that would prevent claimant from returning to her previous work as a home health provider.

Since claimant is able to return to her previous work, she does not meet 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 alleges disability based on mental impairments (depression). The psychological consultative report does not establish that claimant has a severe impairment that prevents substantial gainful activity. Furthermore, claimant did not submit a DHS-49D or a DHS-49E to establish her mental residual functional capacity.

Second, claimant alleges disability based on physical impairments (body pain, right hip pain, back pain and numbness in both arms). The medical report, provided by a consulting psychiatrist, states that claimant does not have a severe impairment that prevents her from doing substantial gainful activity.

During the hearing, claimant testified that a major impediment to her return to work was her back dysfunction and corresponding pain. Unfortunately, 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 profound and credible, but out of proportion to the objective medical evidence as it relates to claimant's ability to work.

In short, the Administrative Law Judge is not persuaded that claimant is totally unable to work, based on her mental impairments, her physical impairments and her pain. Claimant currently performs many activities of daily living and has an active social life with her 19-year-old son. Considering the medical record as a whole, 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 at a theater, as a parking lot attendant, and as a greeter at Wal-Mart.

Based on this analysis, 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: January 5, 2009

Date Mailed: January 5, 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/kgw

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area, obscuring the name and any handwritten notes or dates that might have been present.