

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: 2008-14275
Issue No: 2009; 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
June 5, 2008
Gladwin 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 Baldwin on June 5, 2008. Claimant personally appeared and testified under oath.

The Claimant was represented by [REDACTED].

Claimant requested additional time to submit new medical evidence. Claimant's new medical evidence was submitted to the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) on February 10, 2010. Claimant waived the timeliness requirement so that his new medical evidence could be reviewed by SHRT. After SHRT's second non-disability determination, the Administrative Law Judge issued the decision below.

ISSUES

(1) Did claimant establish a severe mental impairment expected to preclude him 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 him 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/Retro/SDA applicant (December 4, 2007) who was denied by SHRT (April 28, 2008) due to claimant's ability to perform medium work. SHRT relied on Med-Voc Rule 203.26, as a guide. Claimant requests retro-MA for September, October and November 2007.

(2) Claimant's vocational factors are: age--49; education—11th grade, post-high school education—none; work experience—parts cleaner for an automotive manufacturer, groundskeeper for mobile home park, groundskeeper and inside maintenance man for [REDACTED].

(3) Claimant has not performed Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) since 2000 when he worked as a part cleaner for an automotive manufacturer.

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

- (a) Low back pain;
- (b) Shoulder pain;
- (c) Knee pain;
- (d) Aortic aneurism.

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

OBJECTIVE MEDICAL EVIDENCE (APRIL 28, 2008)

Cardiologist note of 1/2007 reports claimant to have CT scan evidence of a small aortic aneurism. Physical exam was otherwise within normal limits. (Page 30).

Treatment note of 10/12/2007 indicated on exam that claimant had findings within normal limits with some decreased range of motion of the lumbar spine. (Page 216).

Treatment note of 12/12/2007 indicated on exam that claimant had findings within normal limits with the exception of tenderness of the lumbar spine and walking with a limp. (Page 213).

██████████ records of 9/2007 indicated Claimant's presentation was within normal limits. His speech was normal. His mood was dysphoric and his affect was depressed. His thought processes and thought contents were within normal limits. (Page 23).

ANALYSIS:

The records in the file suggest that claimant may have difficulty with heavy lifting and constant stooping and crouching. His mental condition may make skilled work difficult for him.

Medical opinion was considered in light of CFR 416.927 [Claimant's treating physician has given less than sedentary work restrictions, based on claimant's physical impairments. However, this Medical Source Opinion (MSO) is inconsistent with the great weight of the objective medical evidence under Rule 416.927(b)(d). The collective medical evidence shows that claimant is capable of performing basic work activities.

(6) Claimant lives with his brother and performs the following Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): dressing, bathing, cooking, dish washing, light cleaning, and grocery shopping (sometimes). Claimant does not use a cane, a walker, a wheelchair, or any kind of brace on his neck, arms or legs. Claimant does use a shower stool on a daily basis.

(7) Claimant has a valid driver's license and drives an automobile approximately 7 times a month. Claimant is not computer literate.

(8) The following medical records are persuasive:

(a) The SHRT summary of the medical evidence is presented in paragraph #5, above.

(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. There are no psychological/psychiatric reports in the record. The [REDACTED] records indicate that claimant's psychological exam was within normal limits. Claimant did not provide a DHS-49D or DHS-49E to show his residual mental 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. The medical/vocational records do show that following exertional impairments: Aortic aneurism, degenerative disc disease of the neck and back, sleep apnea and rheumatoid arthritis.

(11) Claimant has recently 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 he 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 medium work.

The department thinks that claimant's impairments do not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security Listing.

The department denied claimant's MA-P application based on claimant's vocational profile [younger individual, age 49, limited (11th grade) education and history of unskilled work. Using Med-Voc Rule 203.26, the department decided that the claimant did not qualify for MA-P. The department denied SDA benefits based on PEM 261 because the nature and severity of claimant's impairments do not preclude all work activity for at least 90 days.

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 his 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, he 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 and 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 eligibility 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 his physical/mental ability to do basic work activities, he does not meet the Step 2 disability criteria. SHRT found that claimant meets the severity and duration requirements.

Therefore, claimant meets the Step 2 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 Listings.

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

STEP 4

The issue at Step 4 is whether claimant is able to do his previous work. Claimant previously worked as a parts cleaner in an auto parts factory.

Claimant's work in the parts factory was medium work.

Since claimant has breathing problems (COPD), claimant cannot medically return to his job as a parts cleaner using organic solvents.

Therefore, claimant meets the Step 4 eligibility 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 his mental/physical impairments meet the department's definition of disability for MA-P/SDA purposes.

First, claimant alleges that he is unable to work due to his back dysfunction, shoulder dysfunction and knee dysfunction and the resulting 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 his pain is credible, but out of proportion to the objective medical evidence as it relates to claimant's ability to work.

Second, claimant thinks that he is unable to return to work because of his mental impairment (depression). The record submitted by the [REDACTED] agency does not substantiate a mental impairment so severe that claimant is totally unable to work. Furthermore, claimant did not submit a DHS-49D or a DHS-49E to establish exactly what his residential mental functional capacity is.

In short, the Administrative Law Judge is not persuaded that claimant is totally unable to work based on his back, shoulder and knee dysfunction and the pain secondary to those conditions. Even the addition of claimant's aortic aneurism and his breathing impairments do not rise to the level of severity and duration required by MA-P regulations.

In short, the Administrative Law Judge is not persuaded that claimant is totally unable to work. To the contrary, claimant currently performs many activities of daily living, has an active social life and drives an automobile occasionally. This means claimant is able to perform unskilled sedentary work (SGA). In this capacity, he is able to work as a ticket taker for a theatre, as a parking lot attendant, and as a greeter for [REDACTED]. Work of this type would afford claimant a sit-stand option.

Therefore, the department correctly denied claimant's MA-P/SDA application, based on Step 5 of the sequential analysis, as presented above. Also, claimant is not eligible under Med-Voc Rule 203.26.

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: February 26, 2010

Date Mailed: February 26, 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 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

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