

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: 2008-26323
Issue No: 2009
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
October 6, 2008
Wayne County DHS (49)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Linda Steadley Schwarb

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 hearing was held on October 6, 2008. Claimant appeared and testified. Claimant was represented by [REDACTED] of [REDACTED], Inc. Following the hearing, the record was kept open for the receipt of additional medical evidence. Additional documents were received and reviewed.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (DHS or department) properly determine that claimant is not "disabled" for purposes of the Medical Assistance (MA-P) program?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the competent, material and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

(1) On November 19, 2007, an application was filed on claimant's behalf for MA-P benefits.

The application requested MA-P retroactive to August 2007.

- (2) On April 23, 2008, the department denied claimant's application for benefits based upon the belief that claimant did not meet the requisite disability criteria.
- (3) On July 17, 2008, a hearing request was filed to protest the department's determination.
- (4) Claimant, age 41, has a tenth grade education. Claimant reportedly received special education services while in school. Claimant indicated that she has very limited reading and math skills.
- (5) Claimant has had no relevant work experience.
- (6) Claimant has a history of seizures.
- (7) Claimant was hospitalized [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] following complaints of epigastric pain, nausea, and vomiting. She underwent a laparoscopic cholecystectomy. Later, a CT scan revealed collections of pelvic fluid consistent with abscess. Claimant underwent CT guided drainage. While hospitalized, claimant had multiple issues with mood, lability, crying, and anger. Psychiatry was consulted. Claimant was found to have dimensioned capacity for complex decision making.
- (8) Claimant was evaluated by a consulting psychologist for the department on [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. She was found to be mildly retarded with a verbal IQ of 63, performance IQ of 60, and full scale IQ of 59.
- (9) Claimant's cognitive limitations have lasted 12 months or more.

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).

Federal regulations require that the department use the same operative definition for “disabled” as used for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. 42 CFR 435.540(a).

“Disability” is:

...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

In determining whether an individual is disabled, 20 CFR 416.920 requires the trier of fact to follow a sequential evaluation process by which current work activity, the severity of the impairment(s), residual functional capacity, and vocational factors (i.e., age, education, and work experience) are assessed in that order. When a determination that an individual is or is not disabled can be made at any step in the sequential evaluation, evaluation under a subsequent step is not necessary.

First, the trier of fact must determine if the individual is working and if the work is substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.920(b). In this case, claimant is not working. Therefore, claimant may not be disqualified for MA at this step of the sequential evaluation process.

Secondly, in order to be considered disabled for purposes of MA, a person must have a severe impairment. 20 CFR 416.920(c). A severe impairment is an impairment which significantly limits an individual’s physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities.

Basic work activities means 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 purpose of the second step in the sequential evaluation process is to screen out claims lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v. Bowen* 880 F2d 860, 862 (6th Cir, 1988). As a result, the department may only screen out claims at this level which are “totally groundless” solely from a medical standpoint. The *Higgs* court used the severity requirement as a “*de minimus* hurdle” in the disability determination. The *de minimus* standard is a provision of a law that allows the court to disregard trifling matters.

In this case, claimant has presented the required medical data and evidence necessary to support a finding that claimant has significant mental limitations upon claimant’s ability to perform basic work activities such as understanding, carrying out, and remembering simple instructions; responding appropriately to supervision, co-workers, and usual work situations; and dealing with changes in a routine work setting. Medical evidence has clearly established that claimant has an impairment (or combination of impairments) that has more than a minimal effect on claimant’s work activities. See Social Security Rulings 85-28, 88-13, and 82-63.

In the third step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment (or combination of impairments) is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. Based upon claimant's diagnoses that stated above as well as this Administrative Law Judge's personal observation of claimant at the hearing, the undersigned finds that the claimant's impairment meets or equals the listed impairment. See Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404, Part A, section 12.05B. Medical evidence has established that claimant has a full scale IQ of 59. A hearing record establishes that claimant meets or equals a listed impairment. Accordingly, the undersigned finds that claimant is "disabled" for purposes of the MA program.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that claimant meets the definition of medically disabled under the Medical Assistance program as of August 2007.

Accordingly, the department is ordered to initiate a review of the November 19, 2007 application, if it has not already done so, to determine if all other non-medical eligibility criteria are met. The department shall inform claimant and her authorized representative of its determination in writing. Assuming that claimant is otherwise eligible for program benefits, the department shall review claimant's continued eligibility for program benefits in May 2010.

/s/ _____
Linda Steadley Schwarb
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 06/02/09

Date Mailed: 06/03/09

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.

LSS/jlg

cc:

