

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.: 2009-10864
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Load No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
March 2, 2009
Wayne County DHS (82)

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 March 2, 2009. The claimant appeared and testified. The claimant was represented by [REDACTED]. Following the hearing, the record was kept open for 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 September 29, 2008, an application was filed on claimant's behalf for MA-P benefits. The application requested MA-P retroactive to August 2008.

- (2) On October 3, 2008, the department denied claimant's application for benefits based upon the belief that claimant did not meet the requisite disability criteria.
- (3) On December 10, 2008, a hearing request was filed to protest the department's determination.
- (4) Claimant, age 23, has a high school education and 3 years of college.
- (5) Claimant last worked as a cashier at [REDACTED] in February 2008. Claimant has performed relevant work as a customer services representative (telephone work) and as a cashier. Claimant's relevant work history consists exclusively of unskilled work activity.
- (6) Claimant has a history of juvenile myoclonic seizures and asthma.
- (7) Claimant was hospitalized [REDACTED] through [REDACTED] for gastritis.
- (8) Claimant was hospitalized [REDACTED] through [REDACTED] for acute asthma exacerbation.
- (9) At the time of the hearing, claimant was a recipient of the Adult Medical Program and thus had access to doctor visits and prescriptions.
- (10) Claimant currently suffers from juvenile myoclonic epilepsy which is well controlled with medication and asthma which is generally controlled with medication.
- (11) Claimant's primary complaint is fatigue and drowsiness which she attributes to her medication.
- (12) Claimant has no severe impairments other than the standard seizure precautions of no working around heights or moving machinery, etc.
- (13) Claimant is capable of meeting the physical and mental demands associates with her past employment as well as other forms of light work on a regular and continuing basis.

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 general, the claimant has the responsibility to prove that she is disabled. Claimant’s impairment must result from anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which can be shown by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques. A physical or mental impairment must be established by medical evidence consisting of signs, symptoms, and laboratory findings, not only claimant’s statement of symptoms. 20 CFR 416.908; 20 CFR 416.927. Proof must be in the form of medical evidence showing that the claimant has an impairment and the nature and extent of its severity. 20 CFR 416.912. Information must be sufficient to enable a determination as to the nature and limiting effects of the impairment for the period in question, the probable duration

of the impairment and the residual functional capacity to do work-related physical and mental activities. 20 CFR 416.913.

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 in 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 mean 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 physical limitations upon claimant’s ability to perform basic work activities such as walking and standing at heights or around moving machinery and/or lifting extremely heavy objects. 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. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant’s medical record will not support a finding that claimant’s impairment(s) is a “listed impairment” or equal to a listed impairment. See Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404, Part A. Accordingly, claimant cannot be found to be disabled based upon medical evidence alone. 20 CFR 416.920(d).

In the fourth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant’s impairment(s) prevents claimant from doing past relevant work.

20 CFR 416.920(e). In this case, claimant has a history of juvenile myoclonic seizures and asthma. She was hospitalized in August 2008 for gastritis and again in September 2008 for acute asthma exacerbation. At the hearing, claimant reported that she was currently receiving the Adult Medical Program and thus had access to ongoing medical care and prescriptions. Claimant reported that her only complaint was with fatigue and drowsiness which she believed was a result of her medication. Claimant indicated that her seizures were under control with medication and that her asthma was generally under control with medication. Claimant reported that she has been working 4 hours a day on weekends for her grandfather, without pay, performing computer work, data processing, and the like. Claimant has performed past work as a cashier as well as customer services representative (telephone work). It is the finding of this Administrative Law Judge, based upon the medical evidence and objective, physical findings, as well as claimant's own testimony as to her ability to function in her home and the community, that claimant is capable of her past work activities. The record failed to support the position that claimant is incapable of such work. The record further supports the contention that claimant is capable of performing light work activities on a regular and continuing basis. Accordingly, the undersigned must find that the department properly determined that claimant is not "disabled" for purposes of the MA program.

