

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No: 2009-11821
Issue No: 2009, 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
March 10, 2009
Lapeer County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Landis Y. Lain for Jana Bachman

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, an in-person hearing was held on July 9, 2009. Claimant personally appeared and testified. Claimant was represented at the hearing by [REDACTED]

This hearing was originally held by Administrative Law Judge Jana Bachman. Judge Bachman is no longer affiliated with the State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules Department of Human Services and this hearing decision was completed by Administrative Law Judge Landis Y. Lain by considering the record in its entirety.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (the department) properly deny claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P) and State Disability Assistance (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) On March 20, 2008, claimant filed an application for Medical Assistance, State Disability Assistance and Retroactive Medical Assistance benefits alleging disability.
- (2) On July 18, 2008, the Medical Review Team denied claimant's application stating that claimant could perform other work.
- (3) On July 22, 2008, the department case worker sent claimant notice that her application was denied.

- (4) On October 22, 2008, the department caseworker sent claimant's representative a notice that indicated that the case was originally denied July 22, 2008, and this notice was sent to [REDACTED]
- (5) On December 26, 2008, [REDACTED] filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
- (6) On February 17, 2009, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating that claimant was capable of performing other work in the form of medium work per 20 CFR 416.967(c) pursuant to Medical Vocational Rule 203.28, and commented that heart catheterization in February 2008 showed normal coronary arteries and the ejection of 73%. The claimant was 255 pounds in July 2008 with a BMI of 39.65. Her exam was otherwise unremarkable. She would have some limitation due to her weight.
- (7) The hearing was held on March 10, 2009. At the hearing, claimant waived the time periods and requested to submit additional medical information.
- (8) Additional medical information was submitted and sent to the State Hearing Review Team on April 15, 2009.
- (9) On April 21, 2009, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating that claimant is capable of performing other work and could perform medium work per 20 CFR 416.967(c) pursuant to Medical Vocational Rule 203.28 and commented that her catheterization in February 2008 showed normal coronary arteries and an ejection fraction of 73%. The claimant was 255 pounds in July 2008 with a BMI of 39.64. Her exam was otherwise unremarkable. In October 2008 the claimant underwent laparoscopic cholecystectomy inoperative cholangiogram. She would have some limitations due to her weight.
- (10) On the date of hearing claimant was a 35-year-old woman whose birth date is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5'7" tall and weighs 240 pounds. Claimant is a high school graduate. Claimant is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
- (11) On the date of hearing claimant was working as a chore provider for 14 hours per month earning about \$[REDACTED] per month since 2003. Claimant also worked as a facilitator and volunteer services.
- (12) Claimant alleges as disabling impairments: irritable bowel syndrome, heel spurs bilateral, thyroid problems, heart disease caused by irritable bowel syndrome.

(13) This request for a hearing was untimely.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The regulations governing the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are found in the Michigan Administrative Code, MAC R 400.901-400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because his or her claim for assistance has been denied. MAC R 400.903(1). Clients have the right to contest a department decision affecting eligibility or benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. The department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness of that decision. BAM 600.

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).

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 Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 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).

In this case, the claimant's last representative submitted an application for disability on March 20, 2008. The notice of denial of benefits was sent to the claimant on July 22, 2008. The authorized hearing representative at some time became aware of the denial and submitted a hearing request on December 26, 2008. A currently dated denial was sent to the hearing representative on October 22, 2008. However, the original date of notice to the claimant stands.

The authorized hearing representative or, if none, the customer has 90 days from the date of the written notice of case action to request a hearing, BAM, Item 600, p. 5. A claimant shall be provided 90 days from the mailing of the notice in R400.902 to request a hearing. R400.904(4). The claimant shall be provided reasonable time, not to exceed 90 days in which to appeal an agency action. 45 CFR 205.10. The agency must allow the applicant or recipient a reasonable time, not to exceed 90 days from the date that notice of action is mailed, to request a hearing. 42 CFR 431.221. Claimant's representative argues that lack of notice to the representative results in lack of or insufficiency of notice. Department policy also indicates that the application forms and each written notice of case action inform clients of their right to a hearing. These include an explanation of how and where to file a hearing request, and the right to be assisted by representative by anyone the client chooses. The claimant must receive a written notice of all case actions affecting eligibility or amounts of benefits. When the case action is completed it must specify:

- The action being taken by the department; and
- The reason for the action, and
- The specific manual item that cites the legal base for an action or the regulation or a law itself. See BAM, Item 220. BAM, Item 600, p. 1.

In this case, the department did provide the claimant with notice as is required by department policy. Notice did not return to the department as undeliverable. The representative contends, without citing any authority that it is entitled to independent notice of denial as opposed to a copy of the previous denial. There are two types of written notice: adequate and timely. A notice of case action, in this case, did specify the action being taken by the department, the reason for the action, the specific manual item which cites the base for an action, or the regulation or law itself. An explanation of right to request a hearing and the condition under which benefits are continued if the hearing if the hearing is requested. An adequate notice is a written notice such as a client at the same time when action takes effect (not pending). Adequate notice is given in the following circumstances:

- Approval and denial of an application
- An increase in benefits. BAM, Item 220, pp. 1-2.

The representative is not entitled to a hearing solely on this issue when notice was sent to the client. The representative stands in the shoes of the client and does not retain rights which are separate from the client's. Ultimately, this request for a hearing is DISMISSED for lack of timeliness.

In the alternative, if this Administrative Law Judge were able to take jurisdiction of this; At Step 1, claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity but was working on the date of hearing as a chore provider 14 hours per month for about \$[REDACTED] per month. Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

The subjective and objective medical evidence on the record indicates that claimant lives with family and is able to drive and does have a driver's license. Claimant does cook and does grocery shop but needs help with lifting pushing and bending. Claimant does do housekeeping duties with help and she can bathe and dress herself. Claimant testified that she can walk for 10 minutes, stand for 15 minutes, sit for 15 minutes at a time and said she needs help with lifting. Claimant testified that she is right handed and she suffers from irritable bowel syndrome, cramps and pain in the abdomen, painful bloating, heel spurs, thyroid problems, and heart disease.

At Step 2, claimant has the burden of proof of establishing that she has a severely restrictive physical or mental impairment that has lasted or is expected to last for the duration of at least 12 months. There is insufficient objective clinical medical evidence in the record that claimant suffers a severely restrictive physical or mental impairment. Claimant has reports of pain in multiple areas of her body; however, there are no corresponding clinical findings that support the reports of symptoms and limitations made by the claimant. There are no laboratory or x-ray findings listed in the file. The clinical impression is that claimant is stable. There is no medical finding that claimant has any muscle atrophy or trauma, abnormality or injury that is consistent with a deteriorating condition. In short, claimant has restricted herself from tasks associated with occupational functioning based upon her reports of pain (symptoms) rather than medical findings. Reported symptoms are an insufficient basis upon which a finding that claimant has met the evidentiary burden of proof can be made. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the medical record is insufficient to establish that claimant has a severely restrictive physical impairment.

Claimant alleges no disabling mental impairments.

For mental disorders, severity is assessed in terms of the functional limitations imposed by the impairment. Functional limitations are assessed using the criteria in paragraph (B) of the listings for mental disorders (descriptions of restrictions of activities of daily living, social functioning; concentration, persistence, or pace; and ability to tolerate increased mental demands associated with competitive work)... 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(C).

There is insufficient objective medical/psychiatric evidence in the record indicating claimant suffers severe mental limitations. There is no mental residual functional capacity assessment in the record. There is insufficient evidence contained in the file of depression or a cognitive dysfunction that is so severe that it would prevent claimant from working at any job. Claimant was oriented to time, person and place during the hearing. Claimant was able to answer all of the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. The evidentiary record is insufficient to find that claimant suffers a severely restrictive mental impairment. For these reasons, this Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant has failed to meet her burden of proof at Step 2. Claimant must be denied benefits at this step based upon her failure to meet the evidentiary burden.

If claimant had not been denied at Step 2, the analysis would proceed to Step 3 where the medical evidence of claimant's condition does not give rise to a finding that she would meet a statutory listing in the code of federal regulations.

If claimant had not already been denied at Step 2, this Administrative Law Judge would have to deny her again at Step 4 based upon her ability to perform her past relevant work. There is no evidence upon which this Administrative Law Judge could base a finding that claimant is unable to perform work in which she has engaged in, in the past. Therefore, if claimant had not already been denied at Step 2, she would be denied again at Step 4.

The Administrative Law Judge will continue to proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine whether or not claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in her prior jobs.

At Step 5, the burden of proof shifts to the department to establish that claimant does not have residual functional capacity.

The residual functional capacity is what an individual can do despite limitations. All impairments will be considered in addition to ability to meet certain demands of jobs in the national economy. Physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements and other functions will be evaluated.... 20 CFR 416.945(a).

To determine the physical demands (exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, we classify jobs as sedentary, light, medium and heavy. These terms have the same meaning as they have in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, published by the Department of Labor... 20 CFR 416.967.

Sedentary work. Sedentary work involves lifting no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. Although a sedentary job is defined as one which involves sitting, a certain amount of walking and standing is often necessary in carrying out job duties. Jobs are sedentary if

walking and standing are required occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. 20 CFR 416.967(a).

Light work. Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 10 pounds. Even though the weight lifted may be very little, a job is in this category when it requires a good deal of walking or standing, or when it involves sitting most of the time with some pushing and pulling of arm or leg controls.... 20 CFR 416.967(b).

Claimant has submitted insufficient objective medical evidence that she lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in her prior employment or that she is physically unable to do light or sedentary tasks if demanded of her. Claimant's activities of daily living do not appear to be very limited and she should be able to perform light or sedentary work even with her impairments. Claimant has failed to provide the necessary objective medical evidence to establish that she has a severe impairment or combination of impairments which prevent her from performing any level of work for a period of 12 months. The claimant's testimony as to her limitations indicates that she should be able to perform light or sedentary work.

There is insufficient objective medical/psychiatric evidence contained in the file of depression or a cognitive dysfunction that is so severe that it would prevent claimant from working at any job. Claimant was able to answer all the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. Claimant was oriented to time, person and place during the hearing. Claimant's complaints of pain, while profound and credible, are out of proportion to the objective medical evidence contained in the file as it relates to claimant's ability to perform work. Therefore, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the objective medical evidence on the record does not establish that claimant has no residual functional capacity. Claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 5 based upon the fact that she has not established by objective medical evidence that she cannot perform light or sedentary work even with her impairments. Under the Medical-Vocational guidelines, a younger individual (age 37), with a high school education and an unskilled work history who is limited to light or medium work is not considered disabled pursuant to Medical Vocational Rule 203.28.

The Federal Regulations at 20 CFR 404.1535 speak to the determination of whether Drug Addiction and Alcoholism (DAA) is material to a person's disability and when benefits will or will not be approved. The regulations require the disability analysis be completed prior to a determination of whether a person's drug and alcohol use is material. It is only when a person meets the disability criterion, as set forth in the regulations, that the issue of materiality becomes relevant. In such cases, the regulations require a sixth step to determine the materiality of DAA to a person's disability.

When the record contains evidence of DAA, a determination must be made whether or not the person would continue to be disabled if the individual stopped using drugs or alcohol. The trier of fact must determine what, if any, of the physical or mental

limitations would remain if the person were to stop the use of the drugs or alcohol and whether any of these remaining limitations would be disabling.

The department's Program Eligibility Manual contains the following policy statements and instructions for caseworkers regarding the State Disability Assistance program: to receive State Disability Assistance, a person must be disabled, caring for a disabled person or age 65 or older. BEM, Item 261, p. 1. Because the claimant does not meet the definition of disabled under the MA-P program and because the evidence of record does not establish that claimant is unable to work for a period exceeding 90 days, the claimant does not meet the disability criteria for State Disability Assistance benefits either.

The Department has established by the necessary competent, material and substantial evidence on the record that it was acting in compliance with department policy when it determined that claimant was not eligible to receive Medical Assistance and/or State Disability Assistance.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department has appropriately established on the record that it was acting in compliance with department policy when it denied claimant's application for Medical Assistance, retroactive Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance benefits. The claimant should be able to perform a wide range of light or sedentary work even with her impairments. The department has established its case by a preponderance of the evidence.

Accordingly, the department's decision in regards to disability is **AFFIRMED** and the request for hearing is **DISMISSED** for lack of timeliness.

Landis

/s/
Y. Lain
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: April 20, 2011

Date Mailed: April 20, 2011

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.

2009-11821/LYL

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.

LYL/alc

cc:

