

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.: 2009-35222
Issue No.: 2009, 4031
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Load No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
November 4, 2009
Wayne County DHS (17)

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 November 4, 2009. Claimant appeared and testified with the assistance of an interpreter. 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) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) programs?

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 December 28, 2008, claimant applied for MA-P and SDA benefits. Claimant did not request retroactive medical coverage.
- 2) On July 22, 2009, the department denied claimant's application for benefits based upon the belief that claimant did not meet the requisite disability criteria.
- 3) On July 28, 2009, claimant filed a hearing request to protest the department's determination.
- 4) Claimant, age 49, has a college degree from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Claimant came to this country in [REDACTED]. He reports that he is unable to speak English but is able to read and write "a little bit."
- 5) Claimant was last employed in December of 2008 as a line or machine operator.
- 6) At the time of the hearing, claimant was receiving unemployment compensation and reportedly actively seeking employment.
- 7) Claimant has a history of coronary artery disease with multiple heart catheterizations and stent placements.
- 8) Claimant is currently suffering from coronary artery disease, ischemic cardiomyopathy, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and gastroesophageal reflux disease with peptic ulcer disease.
- 9) Claimant has severe limitations upon his ability to walk or stand for prolonged periods of time and/or lift extremely heavy objects. Claimant's limitations have lasted or are expected to last twelve months or more.
- 10) Claimant's complaints and allegations concerning his impairments and limitations, when considered in light of all objective medical evidence, as well as

the record as a whole, reflect an individual who has the physical and mental capacity to engage in light work activities 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, claimant has the responsibility to prove that he 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 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 he has significant physical limitations upon his ability to perform basic work activities such as walking and standing for prolonged periods of time and 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 him from doing his past relevant work. 20 CFR 416.920(e). In this case, claimant was working in December of 2008 as a line or machine operator. He was laid off from his job. At the time of the hearing, claimant was receiving unemployment compensation and reported that he was actively seeking employment. It appears that claimant is indeed capable of his past work as a line operator or machine operator. Nonetheless, even if claimant is no longer capable of such work activities, he is capable of performing other forms of work.

In the fifth 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 other work. 20 CFR 416.920(f). This determination is based upon the claimant's:

- (1) residual functional capacity defined simply as "what can you still do despite your limitations?" 20 CFR 416.945;
- (2) age, education, and work experience, 20 CFR 416.963-.965; and
- (3) the kinds of work which exist in significant numbers in the national economy which the claimant could perform despite his/her limitations. 20 CFR 416.966.

See *Felton v DSS*, 161 Mich. App 690, 696 (1987).

This Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant's residual functional capacity for work activities on a regular and continuing basis does include the ability to meet the physical and mental demands required to perform light work. Light work is defined as follows:

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).

There is insufficient objective medical evidence, signs, and symptoms to support a determination that claimant is incapable of performing the physical and mental activities necessary for a wide range of light work. In this matter, claimant was hospitalized on [REDACTED] and underwent a heart catheterization. The catheterization resulted in findings of moderate left ventricular dysfunction as well as moderate in-stent restenosis of the left anterior descending artery. Claimant's stent to the left circumflex coronary artery was said to be patent. There was also a finding of minimal mild disease in the right coronary artery. It was recommended that claimant continue with medical therapy and receive treatment as an out-patient. On [REDACTED], claimant was seen by a consulting internist for the [REDACTED]. The consultant reported that claimant suffers from coronary artery disease with multiple heart catheterizations and stent placements, hypertension, high cholesterol, and acid reflux disease. On [REDACTED], claimant's treating cardiologist diagnosed claimant with hypertension, hyperlipidemia, coronary artery disease, and gastroesophageal reflux disease with peptic ulcer disease. The cardiologist found that claimant was capable of lifting ten pounds as well as capable of simple grasping, reaching, and fine manipulation with the bilateral upper extremities. On [REDACTED], the treating cardiologist wrote as follows:

"This letter is in regards to my patient has been under my care since [REDACTED] due to multiple cardiac conditions, which include ischemic cardiomyopathy and coronary artery disease.

According to the patient, he does not have any medical insurance coverage at this time.

It is my professional opinion and recommendation that the patient continue to be seen by myself or another cardiologist at least once every six months."

After review of claimant's hospital records, medical reports from claimant's treating physician and test results, claimant has failed to establish limitations which would compromise his ability to perform a wide range of light work activities on a regular and continuing basis. Claimant acknowledged at the hearing that he is currently receiving unemployment compensation benefits after having been laid off in December of 2008. Claimant reported that he is actively seeking employment. The undersigned finds that this hearing record fails to support the position that claimant is incapable of light work activities.

Considering that claimant, at age 49, is a younger individual, has a college degree from [REDACTED], and has an unskilled work history in this country, this Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant's impairments do not prevent him from doing other work. As a guide, see 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Table 2, Rule 202.17. Accordingly, the undersigned finds that claimant is not presently disabled for purposes of the MA program.

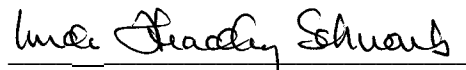
The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program which provides financial assistance for disabled persons is established by 2004 PA 344. The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MAC R 400.3151-400.3180. Department policies are found in the Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

A person is considered disabled for purposes of SDA if the person has a physical or mental impairment which meets federal SSI disability standards for at least 90 days. Receipt of SSI or RSDI benefits based upon disability or blindness or the receipt of MA benefits based upon disability or blindness (MA-P) automatically qualifies an individual as disabled for purposes of the SDA program. Other specific financial and non-financial eligibility criteria are found in

PEM Item 261. In this case, there is insufficient medical evidence to support a finding that claimant is incapacitated or unable to work under SSI disability standards for at least 90 days. Therefore, the undersigned finds that claimant is not presently disabled for purposes of the SDA program.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the Department of Human Services properly determined that claimant is not “disabled” for purposes of the Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance programs. Accordingly, the department’s determination in this matter is hereby affirmed.


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

Date Signed: February 3, 2010

Date Mailed: February 4, 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.

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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.

LSS/pf

cc:

