

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: 2009-11751
Issue No: 2009; 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
April 28, 2009
Genesee 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 on April 28, 2009. Claimant personally appeared and testified under oath.

The department was represented by Pam Lenore (ES).

The Administrative Law Judge appeared by telephone from Lansing.

ISSUES

- (1) Did the department establish a severe mental impairment expected to preclude her 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 her 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 (October 7, 2008) who was denied by SHRT (February 11, 2009) based on claimant's ability to perform unskilled light work. SHRT relies on Med-Voc Rule 202.0 as a guide. Claimant requests retro MA for July, August and September 2008.

(2) Claimant's vocational factors are: age—47; education—high school diploma; post high school education—none; work experience child care provider for [REDACTED], and kitchen worker for [REDACTED], assembly line worker for [REDACTED], mail sorter for [REDACTED].

(3) Claimant has not performed substantial gainful activity (SGA) since April 2008 when she was a child care provider for the [REDACTED].

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

- (a) Hypertension;
- (b) Bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome;
- (c) Bilateral arthritis of the knee;
- (d) Carpal tunnel surgery for right wrist recommended;
- (e) Bilateral leg pain.

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

OBJECTIVE MEDICAL EVIDENCE ([REDACTED]):

SHRT decided that claimant was able to perform unskilled light work. SHRT evaluated claimant's eligibility using the SSI listings at 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, and Appendix. SHRT decided the claimant does not meet any of the applicable listings. SHRT denied disability based on Med-Voc Rule 202.20.

(6) Claimant lives with her husband. Claimant performs the following Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): dressing, bathing, dishwashing (sometimes), and grocery shopping (needs help). Claimant does not use a cane, walker, or wheelchair. She uses a shower stool approximately on a daily basis. She wears arm braces on both wrists on a daily basis. Claimant

received in-hospital services in [REDACTED]. The discharge diagnosis was rule out a stroke and rule out heart attack.

(7) Claimant has a valid drivers' license and drives an automobile twice a month.

Claimant is not computer literate.

(8) The following medical records are persuasive:

(a) A [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] report was reviewed. The physician provided the following background:

Claimant is here for a follow-up on blood pressure. Blood pressure is not controlled with this visit. Denies any chest pain, headaches or vision changes. Also, claimant is here for a follow-up on her hyperlipidemia, she has been doing okay. Denies any muscle aches. Patient tolerated medication. Also, patient complains of pain in multiple joints. Patients state the joints are very stiff when she gets up, but gets better with movement.

The physician provided the following assessment:

- (1) Hypertension (HNT) not controlled;
- (2) Hyperlipidemia;
- (3) Osteoarthritis;
- (4) Chronic knee pain, bilaterally. Due to osteoarthritis.

(9) Claimant does not allege disability based on a mental impairment. Claimant did not provide a DHS-49D or DHS-49E to establish her mental residual functional capacity.

(10) The probative medical evidence does not establish an acute (exertional) physical impairment expected to prevent claimant from performing all types of customary work functions for the required period of time. Claimant testified that she has high blood pressure, carpal tunnel bilateral, carpal tunnel syndrome, and arthritis in both knees and leg pain. A recent physical examination provided the following diagnoses: (1) Hypertension, not controlled; (2) Bilateral carpal tunnel; (3) Chronic knee pain, bilaterally, due to osteoarthritis. The physician from

██████████ did not state, unequivocally, that claimant was totally unable to work due to her exertional impairments.

(11) Claimant recently applied for federal disability benefits from the Social Security Administration. Social Security denied her application. Claimant did not appeal.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

CLAIMANT'S POSITION

Claimant thinks she is entitled to MA-P/SDA based on the impairments listed in Paragraph #4, above.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The department thinks that claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform a wide range of unskilled light work.

The department thinks that claimant's blood pressure is not optimally controlled, but there is no evidence of end organ damage. The department notes since claimant had tenderness about the knee joint line, bilaterally, with no effusion. There was some bony growth and grinding. She had good range of motion and her knee was stable. Anterior and posterior drawer sign was negative. She is able to ambulate without assistance. She also had positive ██████████ bilaterally.

The department denied claimant's disability application based on Med-Voc Rule 202.20.

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 does 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 her 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 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, she 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, or otherwise performing substantial gainful activity (SGA), are not disabled regardless of medical condition, age, education or work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(b).

The vocational evidence of record shows that claimant is not currently performing SGA.

Therefore, claimant meets the Step 1 disability test.

STEP #2

The issue at Step 2 is whether claimant has impairments which meet the SSI definition of severity/duration.

Claimant must establish an impairment which is expected to result in death, or has existed for 12 months, and totally prevents all current work activities. 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).

Since the severity/duration requirement is a *de minimus* requirement, claimant meets the Step 2 disability test.

STEP #3

The issue at Step 3 is whether the claimant meets the Listing of Impairments and SSI regulations. Claimant does not allege disability based on the Listings.

However, SHRT evaluated claimant's eligibility based on the SSI listings. SHRT determined that claimant does not meet any of the Listings.

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

STEP #4

The issue at Step 4 is whether claimant is able to do her previous work. Claimant's last employment was working as child care provider for her grandchildren. This was medium work requiring claimant to be on her feet many hours of the date and to pick up her children on occasion. Based on claimant's current physical impairments, including the bilateral arthritis of her legs, she is not able to return to her previous job as a child care provider for DHS.

Therefore, claimant meets the Step 4 disability 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 her combined impairments meet the department's definition of disability for MA-P/SDA purposes.

First, claimant does not allege disability based on a mental impairment.

Second, claimant alleges disability based on hypertension, bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome, and bilateral arthritis in both knees. Recent medical evidence provided by [REDACTED] shows the following diagnoses: Hypertension, not controlled; bilateral carpal tunnel, and chronic knee pain, bilaterally, due to osteoarthritis. While it is clear from the medical evidence that claimant is not able to perform work that requires constant standing, the medical evidence, at this time, does not totally preclude sedentary employment.

Finally, claimant testified that a major impediment to return to work was bilateral leg pain secondary to her osteoarthritis. Unfortunately, evidence of pain, alone, is insufficient to establish disability for MA-P/SDA purposes.

The Administrative Law Judge concludes that claimant's testimony about her pain is profound and credible but out of proportion to the objective medical evidence as it relates to claimant's ability to work.

In short, the Administrative Law Judge is not persuaded that claimant is totally unable to work based on her combination of impairments. Currently, claimant performs several activities of daily living, has an active social life with her husband and daughter, can drive an automobile twice a week.

Considering the entire medical record, in combination with claimant's testimony, the Administrative Law Judge concludes that claimant is able to perform simple, unskilled sedentary work (SGA). It appears that at some point claimant may be confined to a wheelchair. However, even in a wheelchair, she is able to work as a ticket taker for a theater, as a parking lot attendant and as a greeter for [REDACTED]. Because of the handicapper laws recently enacted in the United States, there are many jobs available for persons with handicaps similar to claimant.

Consistent with this analysis, the department correctly denied claimant's MA-P/SDA application based on Step 5 of the sequential analysis, as presented above.

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: June 10, 2009

Date Mailed: June 11, 2009

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.

JWS/tg

cc:

