

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: 2009-13897  
Issue No: 2009/4031  
Case No: [REDACTED]  
Load No: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date:  
May 13, 2009  
Mecosta County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Marlene B. Magyar

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 May 13, 2009. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

ISSUE

Did the department properly determine claimant is not disabled by Medicaid (MA) and State Disability (SDA) eligibility standards?

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 a single, 61-year-old reportedly former smoker and occasional drinker with a Bachelor's Degree in English from [REDACTED].
- (2) Claimant lives alone in a home he owns; he is completely independent in all basic daily living activities and he has a valid driver's license/roadworthy vehicle.

(3) Additionally, for several years claimant has spent approximately 5-6 hours daily caring for his 90-year-old mother who lives next door; he does her yard work/home repairs and provides significant personal caregiving services (e. g., shopping, transportation, cooking, cleaning, medication maintenance, etc.).

(4) Claimant stands approximately 5'8" tall and weighs approximately 165 pounds; he is right hand dominant.

(5) When the department denied claimant's September 30, 2008 disability-based MA/SDA application, he filed a hearing request dated January 14, 2009.

(6) Claimant has not been employed in more than six years; he last worked running presses and providing janitorial services for a local factory (See also Finding of Fact #3 above).

(7) Claimant has a remote seizure diagnosis; with the prophylactic use of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], his seizure disorder is completely under control.

(8) Periodically, claimant schedules [REDACTED] counseling sessions to deal with his situational stressors (See also Finding of Fact #3 above).

(9) A physical examination done by claimant's medical provider the month he applied for disability benefits, specifically, on September 10, 2008 states in relevant part:

This is a 60-year-old white male who is well-developed, well-nourished, and alert. No acute distress. Vital signs reveal a blood pressure of 128/85. Pulse is 73. Respirations are 16. Temperature is 97.1. Weight is 161.4 pounds. Examination of the patient's neck does reveal some slight enlargement at the base of the neck on the left side. That is where approximately he had his thyroid removed on that side. I did order a thyroid ultrasound and the results show that the right thyroid lobe contains two subcentimeter hypoechoic nodules...the patient's lung sounds are fairly clear to auscultation. AP and lateral without use of accessory muscles. The patient says that he is having no chronic kinds of cough. He thinks that he may have chronic bronchitis by his research that he has done...(Department Exhibit #1, pg 94).

(10) In August, 2008, claimant declined having a lumbar spine MRI done, but apparently, it was rescheduled because the form his medical provider submitted in December, 2008 indicates disc bulging exists at L5-S1 “per MRI;” no disc herniation, canal stenosis, facet arthropathy, or other lumbar abnormalities are noted (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 93 and 99).

(11) Claimant’s surgical history is positive for a left hemithyroidectomy in September, 2006, secondary to capillary thyroid cancer with no recurrence to date, and also, claimant’s thyroid function test that day revealed normal thyroid function with a TSH of 2.13 (Department Exhibit #1, pg 36).

(12) In addition to the anti-seizure medications listed in Finding of Fact #7 above, claimant’s medical provider has prescribed [REDACTED] as needed for pain management and a codine based cough syrup for claimant’s cough (See also Finding of Fact #9 above).

#### 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).

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

The SDA program differs from the federal MA regulations in that the durational requirement is 90 days. This means that the person's impairments must meet the SSI disability standards for 90 days in order for that person to be eligible for SDA benefits.

The person claiming a physical or mental disability has the burden to establish it through the use of competent medical evidence from qualified medical sources such as his or her medical history, clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescribed treatment, prognosis for recovery and/or medical assessment of ability to do work-related activities or ability to reason and to make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is being alleged, 20 CFR 416.913. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.908 and 20 CFR 416.929. By the same token, a conclusory statement by a physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind is not sufficient without supporting medical evidence to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.929.

...We follow a set order to determine whether you are disabled. We review any current work activity, the severity of your impairment(s), your residual functional capacity, your past work, and your age, education and work experience. If we can find that you are disabled or not disabled at any point in the review, we do not review your claim further.... 20 CFR 416.920.

...If you are working and the work you are doing is substantial gainful activity, we will find that you are not disabled regardless of your medical condition or your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(b).

...If you do not have any impairment or combination of impairments which significantly limits your physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, we will find that you do not have a severe impairment and are, therefore, not disabled. We will not consider your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(c).

[In reviewing your impairment]...We need reports about your impairments from acceptable medical sources.... 20 CFR 416.913(a).

...Statements about your pain or other symptoms will not alone establish that you are disabled; there must be medical signs and laboratory findings which show that you have a medical impairment.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

...You must provide medical evidence showing that you have an impairment(s) and how severe it is during the time you say that you are disabled. 20 CFR 416.912(c).

...[The impairment]...must have lasted or must be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. We call this the duration requirement. 20 CFR 416.909.

...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).

...The medical evidence...must be complete and detailed enough to allow us to make a determination about whether you are disabled or blind. 20 CFR 416.913(d).

Medical findings consist of symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings:

- (a) **Symptoms** are your own description of your physical or mental impairment. Your statements alone are not enough to establish that there is a physical or mental impairment.
- (b) **Signs** are anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which can be observed, apart from your statements (symptoms). Signs must be shown by medically acceptable clinical diagnostic techniques. Psychiatric signs are medically demonstrable phenomena which indicate specific psychological abnormalities e.g., abnormalities of behavior, mood, thought, memory, orientation, development, or perception. They must also be shown by observable facts that can be medically described and evaluated.
- (c) **Laboratory findings** are anatomical, physiological, or psychological phenomena which can be shown by the use of a medically acceptable laboratory diagnostic techniques. Some of these diagnostic techniques include chemical tests, electrophysiological studies (electrocardiogram, electroencephalogram, etc.), roentgenological studies (X-rays), and psychological tests. 20 CFR 416.928.

It must allow us to determine --

- (1) The nature and limiting effects of your impairment(s) for any period in question;
- (2) The probable duration of your impairment; and
- (3) Your residual functional capacity to do work-related physical and mental activities. 20 CFR 416.913(d).

...A statement by a medical source that you are "disabled" or "unable to work" does not mean that we will determine that you are disabled. 20 CFR 416.927(e).

[As Judge]...We are responsible for making the determination or decision about whether you meet the statutory definition of disability. In so doing, we review all of the medical findings and other evidence that support a medical source's statement that you are disabled.... 20 CFR 416.927(e).

Additionally, Social Security Ruling 96-4p (SSR 96-4p) states in relevant part:

A “symptom” is not a “medically determinable physical or mental impairment” and no symptom by itself can establish an existence

of such an impairment. In the absence of a showing that there is a “medically determinable physical or mental impairment” an individual must be found not disabled at Step 2 of the sequential evaluation process. No symptom or combination of symptoms can be the basis for a finding of disability, no matter how genuine the individual’s complaints may appear to be, unless there are medical signs and laboratory findings demonstrating the existence of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment.

In addition, 20 CFR 404.1529 and 416.929 provide that an individual’s symptoms, such as pain, fatigue, shortness of breath, weakness, or nervousness, will not be found to affect the individual’s ability to do basic work activities...unless medical signs and laboratory findings show that there is a medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s) that could reasonably be expected to produce the symptom(s) alleged.

Claimant does not qualify for the MA/SDA coverage he seeks because he has not presented any objective medical records to establish the presence of a physical or mental condition supportive of a disability allowance. Furthermore, it must be noted the law does not require an applicant to be completely symptom free before a finding of lack of disability can be rendered. In fact, if an applicant’s symptoms can be managed to the point where substantial gainful employment can be achieved, a finding of not disabled must be rendered. Claimant’s current prescription medications can reasonably be expected to provide adequate symptom control for the documented impairments listed above. Consequently, this Administrative Law Judge concludes claimant is fully capable of working in a wide variety of unskilled jobs currently existing in the national economy, which is the standard to be applied in disability cases. As such, claimant’s September 30, 2008 application must remain denied.

#### DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the department properly determined claimant is not disabled by MA/SDA eligibility standards.

Accordingly, the department's action is AFFIRMED.

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
Marlene B. Magyar  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Ismael Ahmed, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: May 18, 2009

Date Mailed: May 19, 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.

MBM/db

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