

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.: 2009-14788

Issue No.: 2009/4031

Case No.: [REDACTED]

Load No.: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date:

June 1, 2009

Macomb County DHS (12)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Colleen M. Mamelka

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon the Claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, a hearing was conducted from Clinton Township, Michigan on June 1, 2009. The Claimant appeared and testified. The Claimant was represented by attorney [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] appeared on behalf of the Department. At the Claimant's request, the record was extended to allow for the submission of additional medical records.

The additional records were received, reviewed, and forwarded to the State Hearing Review Team ("SHRT") for consideration. On December 18, 2009 the SHRT found the Claimant not disabled. This matter is now before the undersigned for a final decision.

ISSUE

Whether the Department properly determined that the Claimant was not disabled for purposes of the Medical Assistance ("MA-P") and State Disability Assistance ("SDA") programs?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the competent, material and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

1. The Claimant submitted a public assistance application seeking MA-P and SDA benefits on or about September 1, 2008.
2. On November 17, 2008, the Medical Review Team (“MRT”) determined the Claimant was not disabled. (Exhibit 1, pp. 1, 2)
3. The Department sent an eligibility notice to the Claimant informing her that the MA-P and SDA benefits were denied.
4. On January 16, 2009, the Department received the Claimant’s Request for Hearing protesting the denial of benefits. (Exhibit 2)
5. On March 18, 2009, the State Hearing Review Team (“SHRT”) found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 4)
6. On July 21, 2009, the SHRT requested a psychiatric consultative examination.
7. On September 22, 2009, the Claimant attended the psychiatric evaluation.
8. On November 20, 2009, the results of the evaluation were received.
9. On November 24, 2009, the additional records were forwarded to the SHRT for consideration.
10. On December 18, 2009, the SHRT determined the Claimant was not disabled.
11. The Claimant’s alleged physical disabling impairments are due to back, knee, and foot pain, herniated disc, and osteoarthritis.
12. The Claimant asserts mental disabling impairments due to bipolar and depressive disorders, anxiety, and attention deficit hyperactive disorder (“ADHD”).

13. At the time of hearing, the Claimant was 42 years old with a [REDACTED] birth date; was 5' 9" in height; and weighed approximately 265 pounds.
14. The Claimant graduated from high school with some college with an employment history of work as a cook, waitress, secretary, and self-employment providing house cleaning services.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Medical Assistance ("MA") program is established by Subchapter XIX of Chapter 7 of The Public Health & Welfare Act, 42 USC 1397, and is administered by the Department of Human Services ("DHS"), formally known as the Family Independence Agency, 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").

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) 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 make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is alleged. 20 CFR 413.913 An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.908; 20 CFR 416.929(a) Similarly, conclusory statements by a

physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind, absent supporting medical evidence, is insufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.927

When determining disability, the federal regulations require several factors to be considered including: (1) the location/duration/frequency/intensity of an applicant's pain; (2) the type/dosage/effectiveness/side effects of any medication the applicants takes to relieve pain; (3) any treatment other than pain medication that the applicant has received to relieve pain; and (4) the effect of the applicant's pain on his or her ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3) The applicant's pain must be assessed to determine the extent of his or her functional limitation(s) in light of the objective medical evidence presented. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(2)

In order to determine whether or not an individual is disabled, federal regulations require a five-step sequential evaluation process be utilized. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(1) The five-step analysis requires the trier of fact to consider an individual's current work activity; the severity of the impairment(s) both in duration and whether it meets or equals a listed impairment in Appendix 1; residual functional capacity to determine whether an individual can perform past relevant work; and residual functional capacity along with vocational factors (i.e. age, education, and work experience) to determine if an individual can adjust to other work. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945

If an individual is found disabled, or not disabled, at any step, a determination or decision is made with no need evaluate subsequent steps. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4) If a determination cannot be made that an individual is disabled, or not disabled, at a particular step, the next step is required. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4) If an impairment does not meet or equal a listed impairment, an individual's residual functional capacity is assessed before moving from step three to step four.

20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945 Residual functional capacity is the most an individual can do despite the limitations based on all relevant evidence. 20 CFR 945(a)(1) An individual's residual functional capacity assessment is evaluated at both steps four and five. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4) In determining disability, an individual's functional capacity to perform basic work activities is evaluated and if found that the individual has the ability to perform basic work activities without significant limitation, disability will not be found. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(iv) In general, the individual has the responsibility to prove disability. 20 CFR 416.912(a) An impairment or combination of impairments is not severe if it does not significantly limit an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.921(a) The individual has the responsibility to provide evidence of prior work experience; efforts to work; and any other factor showing how the impairment affects the ability to work. 20 CFR 416.912(c)(3)(5)(6)

In addition to the above, when evaluating mental impairments, a special technique is utilized. 20 CFR 416.920a(a) First, an individual's pertinent symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings are evaluated to determine whether a medically determinable mental impairment exists. 20 CFR 416.920a(b)(1) When a medically determinable mental impairment is established, the symptoms, signs and laboratory findings that substantiate the impairment are documented to include the individual's significant history, laboratory findings, and functional limitations. 20 CFR 416.920a(e)(2) Functional limitation(s) is assessed based upon the extent to which the impairment(s) interferes with an individual's ability to function independently, appropriately, effectively, and on a sustained basis. *Id.*; 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(2) Chronic mental disorders, structured settings, medication, and other treatment and the effect on the overall degree of functionality is considered. 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(1) In addition, four broad functional areas

(activities of daily living; social functioning; concentration, persistence or pace; and episodes of decompensation) are considered when determining an individual's degree of functional limitation. 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(3) The degree of limitation for the first three functional areas is rated by a five point scale: none, mild, moderate, marked, and extreme. 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(4) A four point scale (none, one or two, three, four or more) is used to rate the degree of limitation in the fourth functional area. *Id.* The last point on each scale represents a degree of limitation that is incompatible with the ability to do any gainful activity. *Id.*

After the degree of functional limitation is determined, the severity of the mental impairment is determined. 20 CFR 416.920a(d) If severe, a determination of whether the impairment meets or is the equivalent of a listed mental disorder. 20 CFR 416.920a(d)(2) If the severe mental impairment does not meet (or equal) a listed impairment, an individual's residual functional capacity is assessed. 20 CFR 416.920a(d)(3)

As outlined above, the first step looks at the individual's current work activity. An individual is not disabled regardless of the medical condition, age, education, and work experience, if the individual is working and the work is a substantial, gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4)(i) In the record presented, the Claimant is not involved in substantial gainful activity and last worked in June of 2008. The Claimant is not ineligible for disability under Step 1.

The severity of the Claimant's alleged impairment(s) is considered under Step 2. The Claimant bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairments. In order to be considered disabled for MA purposes, the impairment must be severe. 20 CFR 916.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(b) An impairment, or combination of impairments, is severe if it significantly limits an individual's physical or mental

ability to do basic work activities regardless of age, education and work experience. 20 CFR 916.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(c) Basic work activities means the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. 20 CFR 916.921(b) Examples 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.

*Id.* The second step allows for dismissal of a disability claim obviously lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v Bowen*, 880 F2d 860, 862 (CA 6, 1988). The severity requirement may still be employed as an administrative convenience to screen out claims that are totally groundless solely from a medical standpoint. *Id.* at 863 citing *Farris v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 773 F2d 85, 90 n.1 (CA 6, 1985) An impairment qualifies as non-severe only if, regardless of a claimant's age, education, or work experience, the impairment would not affect the claimant's ability to work. *Salmi v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 774 F2d 685, 692 (CA 6, 1985)

In the present case, the Claimant alleges physical disability on the basis of back, knee, and foot pain, herniated disc, and osteoarthritis. The Claimant asserts mental disabling impairments due to bipolar and depressive disorders, anxiety, and ADHD. In support, reports from MRI scans of the Claimant's lumbar and cervical spine from [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED], were submitted which documented facet arthritic/degenerative changes in the cervical spine as well as mild/moderate right foraminal disc protrusion/extrusion

with right crainial extension at C5-6. No significant foraminal stenosis or central spinal stenosis was found.

On [REDACTED], an x-ray of the Claimant right foot revealed no evidence of fracture or deformity with an unremarkable bone structure. A inferior calcaneal spur was documented.

On [REDACTED], the Claimant attended a psychological evaluation. The Weschsler Adult Intelligence Scale III (“WAIS III”), Wide Range Achievement, and Vocational Preference Inventory tests were administered. The Claimant’s memory was found to be in the average range with a WAIS III full Scale IQ of 79 which placed her in the Borderline Range of cognitive functioning. The Claimant’s Verbal and Performance IQ scores differed significantly reflecting that stronger veral skills compared to her visual-motor skills. The Claimant was found to give up easily thus her Full Scale IQ score was likely under-estimated. Ultimately, the Claimant was diagnosed with depressive disorder, not otherwise specified, antisocial personality disorder, with a current GAF of 60. The Claimant’s prognosis was guarded.

On [REDACTED], a Medical Needs form was completed by the Claimant’s treating physician. The current diagnoses were listed as degenerative joint disease, chronic ankle strain, edema, with an unsteady gait. The Claimant was found unable to work at any job.

On this same date, [REDACTED], a Medical Examination Report was completed on behalf of the Claimant. The Claimant was restricted to occasionally lifting/carrying up to 5 pounds; unable to stand, with walking limited to up to 1 hour during an 8 hour workday. The Claimant was found able to sit during this same time period with no restrictions on her ability to perform repetitive actions with both upper extremities. The Claimant was able to meet her needs at home.

On [REDACTED], an MRI was performed on the Claimant's right ankle which documented an enlargement of the tibialis posterior tendon with some adjacent fluid suggestive of a partial tear.

On [REDACTED], the Claimant attended a psychiatric evaluation. The Claimant's mood was depressed and her memory was intact however her concentration, attention span, insight, and judgment were impaired. The Claimant was diagnosed with bipolar disorder type I, mixed, with a Global Assessment Functioning ("GAF") of 50. The Claimant's prognosis was guarded.

On [REDACTED], a Medical Examination Report was completed on behalf of the Claimant. The current diagnoses was listed as a partial tibialis posterior tendon tear, degenerative joint disease, obesity, and edema. The Claimant was found in need of surgery. The Claimant's condition was listed as stable/deteriorating and she was found unable to lift/carry any weight. Assistive devices were not required and the Claimant was able to perform repetitive actions with both hands/arms and operate foot/leg controls with her left foot/leg. There were no mental limitations noted.

On [REDACTED], a Psychiatric/Psychological Examination Report was completed on behalf of the Claimant. The Claimant attended the evaluation alone; was appropriately dressed; and was on time. The Claimant had to be redirected on multiple occasions to remain on track. Ultimately, the Claimant was diagnosed with bipolar disorder with a GAF of 45.

On [REDACTED], an MRI of the Claimant right ankle was performed which was correlated to a [REDACTED] MRI. The MRI revealed a significant worsening at the anterior aspect of the calcaneus which were suggestive of sinus tarsi syndrome. The tibialis posterior tendon's enlargement was reduced from previously and a small amount of fluid adjacent to the

tendons was noted and suggestive of mild tenosynovitis, less than previously. An increased signal at the medial soft tissues was suggestive of edema.

On [REDACTED], the Claimant's treating physician submitted a letter stating that since [REDACTED], the Claimant has been under orthopedic care and required to wear a special boot on her foot. The diagnoses were listed as unsteady gait, severe ankle sprain, and a torn ligament to the ankle. The D.O. opined that the Claimant was considered totally disabled and unable to work.

On [REDACTED], a Mental Residual Functional Capacity Assessment was completed on behalf of the Claimant. The Claimant was found markedly limited in her ability to understand, remember, and carry out detailed instructions, and in her ability to maintain attention and concentration for extended periods. In addition, the Claimant was found markedly limited in her ability to set realistic goals or make plans independently of others. The Claimant's GAF was 45.

On [REDACTED], the Claimant attended a psychiatric consultative examination. The Claimant was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and eating disorder associated with obesity with a history of cocaine and marijuana abuse along with nicotine dependence. The GAF was 57.

As previously noted, the Claimant bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairment(s). As summarized above, the Claimant has presented medical evidence establishing that she does have some physical and mental limitations on her ability to perform basic work activities. The medical evidence has established that the Claimant has an impairment, or combination thereof, that has more than a *de minimis* effect on the Claimant's basic work activities. Further, the impairments have lasted

continuously for twelve months; therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receipt of MA-P benefits under Step 2.

In the third step of the sequential analysis 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. The Claimant has alleged physical disabling impairments due to to back, knee, and foot pain, herniated disc, and osteoarthritis. The medical record also documents degenerative joint disease.

Listing 1.00 defines musculoskeletal system impairments. Disorders of the musculoskeletal system may result from hereditary, congenital, or acquired pathologic processes. 1.00A Impairments may result from infectious, inflammatory, or degenerative processes, traumatic or developmental events, or neoplastic, vascular, or toxic/metabolic diseases. 1.00A Regardless of the cause(s) of a musculoskeletal impairment, functional loss for purposes of these listings is defined as the inability to ambulate effectively on a sustained basis for any reason, including pain associated with the underlying musculoskeletal impairment, or the inability to perform fine and gross movements effectively on a sustained basis for any reason, including pain associated with the underlying musculoskeletal impairment. Inability to ambulate effectively means an extreme limitation of the ability to walk; i.e., an impairment(s) that interferes very seriously with the individual's ability to independently initiate, sustain, or complete activities. 1.00B2b(1) Ineffective ambulation is defined generally as having insufficient lower extremity function to permit independent ambulation without the use of a hand-held assistive device(s) that limits the functioning of both upper extremities. (Listing 1.05C is an exception to this general definition because the individual has the use of only one upper extremity due to amputation of a hand.) *Id.* To ambulate effectively, individuals must be capable of sustaining a reasonable

walking pace over a sufficient distance to be able to carry out activities of daily living. 1.00B2b(2) The individual must have the ability to travel without companion assistance to and from a place of employment or school. . . . *Id.*

Major joints refers to the major peripheral joints. 1.00F The ankle and foot are considered separately in evaluating weight bearing. *Id.* When an individual's impairment involves a lower extremity uses a hand-held assistive device, such as a cane, crutch or walker, the medical basis for use of the device should be documented. 1.00J4 The requirement to use a hand-held assistive device may also impact an individual's functional capacity by virtue of the fact that one or both upper extremities are not available for such activities as lifting, carrying, pushing, and pulling. *Id.*

On August 24, 1999, the Social Security Administration deleted Listing 9.09 regarding obesity from the Listing of Impairments. SSR 02-1p In conjunction, the final rule in the Federal Register deleting 9.09, added paragraphs to the prefaces of the musculoskeletal, respiratory, and cardiovascular body system listings that provide guidance regarding the potential effects obesity has in causing or contributing to impairments in those body systems. *Id.* Obesity is a medically determinable impairment that is often associated with disturbance of the musculoskeletal system, and disturbance of this system can be a major cause of disability in individuals with obesity. 1.00Q The combined effects of obesity with musculoskeletal impairments may be greater than the effects of each of the impairments considered separately. *Id.* Therefore, when determining whether an individual with obesity has a listing-level impairment or combination of impairments (and when assessing a claim at other steps of the sequential evaluation process, including when assessing an individual's residual functional capacity) any additional and cumulative effects of obesity is considered. *Id.* The National Institute of Health (NIH) established medical criteria for

the diagnosis of obesity in its *Clinical Guidelines on the Identification, Evaluation, and Treatment of Overweight and Obesity in Adults* (NIH Publication No. 98-4083, September 1998). SSR 02-1p These guidelines classify overweight and obesity in adults according to Body Mass Index (“BMI”) which is the ratio of an individual’s weight in kilograms to the square of his/her height in meters. *Id.* For adults, the *Clinical Guidelines* describe a BMI of 25-29.9 as “overweight” with obesity being 30.0 or above. *Id.* The guidelines recognize three levels of obesity. Level I includes BMIs of 30.0-34.9; Level 2 includes BMIs of 35.0-39.9; and Level 3 (termed “extreme” obesity) includes BMIs of 40.0 or above. *Id.*

Categories of Musculoskeletal include:

- 1.02 Major dysfunction of a joint(s) due to any cause: Characterized by gross anatomical deformity (e.g. subluxation, contracture, bony or fibrous ankylosis, instability) and chronic joint pain and stiffness with signs of limitation of motion or other abnormal motion of the affected joint(s), and findings on appropriate medically acceptable imaging of joint space narrowing, bony destruction, or ankylosis of the affected joint(s). With:
  - A. Involvement of one major peripheral weight-bearing joint (i.e., hip, knee, or ankle), resulting in inability to ambulate effectively as defined in 1.00B2b; or
  - B. Involvement of one major peripheral joint in each upper extremity (i.e., shoulder, elbow, wrist, hand), resulting in inability to perform fine and gross movements effectively a defined in 1.00B2c
  
- 1.03 Reconstructive surgery or surgical arthrodesis of a major weight- bearing joint, with inability to ambulate effectively, as defined in 1.00B2b, and return to effective ambulation did not occur, or is not expected to occur, within 12 months of onset.
  
- 1.04 Disorders of the spine (e.g., herniated nucleus pulposus, spinal arachnoiditis, spinal stenosis, osteoarthritis, degenerative disc disease, facet arthritis, and vertebral fracture), resulting in compromise of a nerve root (including the cauda equine) or spinal cord. With:

- A. Evidence of nerve root compression characterized by neuro-anatomic distribution of pain, limitation of motion of the spine, motor loss (atrophy with associated muscle weakness or muscle weakness) accompanied by sensory or reflex loss and, if there is involvement of the lower back, positive straight-leg raising test (sitting and supine); or
- B. Spinal arachnoiditis, confirmed by an operative note or pathology report of tissue biopsy, or by appropriate medically acceptable imaging, manifested by severe burning or painful dysesthesia, resulting in the need for changes in position or posture more than once every 2 hours; or
- C. Lumbar spinal stenosis resulting in pseudoclaudication, established by findings on appropriate medically acceptable imaging, manifested by chronic nonradicular pain and weakness, and resulting in inability to ambulate effectively, as defined in 1.00B2b. (see above definition)

1.06 Fracture of the femur, tibia, pelvis, or one or more of the tarsal bones. With:

- A. Solid union not evident on appropriate medically acceptable imaging and not clinically solid;

and

- B. Inability to ambulate effectively as defined in 1.00B2b, and return to effective ambulation did not occur or is not expected to occur within 12 months of onset.

In this case, the objective medical records document the Claimant's degenerative joint disease, ankle pain with partial torn ligament. A possible fracture was not ruled out however the need for hand-held assistive devices was not documented although the Claimant did wear a boot. The Claimant has a Level 2 BMI. There was no evidence of nerve root compression, anatomical deformity, joint space narrowing, bony destruction, and/or ankylosis. Further, although the Claimant's gait was unsteady, the Claimant was able to ambulate. Ultimately, based upon the

objective medical records, there was insufficient evidence presented to meet the intent and severity requirement (or the medical equivalent thereof) of a listed impairment within Listing 1.00 as detailed above.

The Claimant also alleges mental disabling impairment(s) due to bipolar and depressive disorders, anxiety, and ADHD. Listing 12.00 encompasses adult mental disorders. The evaluation of disability on the basis of mental disorders requires documentation of a medically determinable impairment(s) and consideration of the degree in which the impairment limits the individual's ability to work, and whether these limitations have lasted or are expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. 12.00A The existence of a medically determinable impairment(s) of the required duration must be established through medical evidence consisting of symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings, to include psychological test findings. 12.00B The evaluation of disability on the basis of a mental disorder requires sufficient evidence to (1) establish the presence of a medically determinable mental impairment(s), (2) assess the degree of functional limitation the impairment(s) imposes, and (3) project the probable duration of the impairment(s). 12.00D The evaluation of disability on the basis of mental disorders requires documentation of a medically determinable impairment(s) and consideration of the degree in which the impairment limits the individual's ability to work consideration, and whether these limitations have lasted or are expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. 12.00A

Chronic mental disorders may be controlled or attenuated by psychosocial factors that provide highly structured and supportive settings which may greatly reduce the mental demands placed on an individual. 12.00G If an individual's symptomatology is controlled, the ability to function outside of the structured setting is considered. *Id.* In addition, the effects of medication

are considered as it relates to an individual's ability to function. Functional limitations that persist despite medication are also considered when determining the severity of the impairment.

## 12.00G

Listing 12.04 defines affective disorders as being characterized by a disturbance of mood, accompanied by a full or partial manic or depressive syndrome. Generally, affective disorders involve either depression or elation. The required level of severity for these disorders are met when the requirements of both A and B are satisfied, or when the requirements in C are satisfied.

A. Medically documented persistence, either continuous or intermittent, of one of the following:

1. Depressive syndrome characterized by at least four of the following:
  - a. Anhedonia or pervasive loss of interest in almost all activities; or
  - b. Appetite disturbance with change in weight; or
  - c. Sleep disturbance; or
  - d. Psychomotor agitation or retardation; or
  - e. Decreased energy; or
  - f. Feelings of guilt or worthlessness; or
  - g. Difficulty concentrating or thinking; or
  - h. Thoughts of suicide; or
  - i. Hallucinations, delusions, or paranoid thinking; or
2. Manic syndrome characterized by at least three of the following:
  - a. Hyperactivity; or
  - b. Pressure of speech; or
  - c. Flight of ideas; or
  - d. Inflated self-esteem; or
  - e. Decreased need for sleep; or
  - f. Easy distractability; or
  - g. Involvement in activities that have a high probability of painful consequences which are not recognized; or

- h. Hallucinations, delusions, or paranoid thinking; or
- 3. Bipolar syndrome with a history of episodic periods manifested by the full symptomatic picture of both manic and depressive syndromes (and currently characterized by either or both syndromes)'

AND

B. Resulting in at least two of the following:

- 1. Marked restriction on activities of daily living; or
- 2. Marked difficulties in maintaining social functioning; or
- 3. Marked difficulties in maintaining concentration, persistence, or pace; or
- 4. Repeated episodes of decompensation, each of extended duration;

OR

C. Medically documented history of chronic affective disorder of at least 2 years' duration that has caused more than a minimal limitation of ability to do basic work activities, with symptoms or signs currently attenuated by medication or psychosocial support, and one of the following:

- 1. Repeated episodes of decompensation, each of extended duration; or
- 2. A residual disease process that has resulted in such marginal adjustment that even minimal increase in mental demands or change in the environment would be predicted to cause the individual to decompensate; or
- 3. Current history of 1 or more years' inability to function outside a highly supportive living arrangement, with an indication of continued need for such an arrangement.

Listing 12.05 discusses adult mental retardation which refers to significant subaverage intellectual functioning with deficits in adaptive functioning initially manifested during the developmental period (i.e., the evidence demonstrates or supports the onset of the impairment before age 22). The required level of severity for this disorder is met when the requirements of A, B, C, or D are satisfied.

- A. Mental incapacity evidenced by dependence upon others for personal needs (e.g., toileting, eating, dressing, or bathing) and inability to follow directions, such that the use of standardized measures of intellectual functioning is precluded;

OR

- B. A valid verbal, performance, or full scale IQ of 59 or less;

OR

- C. A valid verbal, performance, or full scale IQ of 60 through 70 and a physical or other mental impairment imposing an additional and significant work-related limitation of function;

OR

- D. A valid verbal, performance, or full scale IQ of 60 through 70, resulting in at least two of the following:
  - 1. Marked restriction of activities of daily living; or
  - 2. Marked difficulties in maintaining social functioning; or
  - 3. Marked difficulties in maintaining concentration, persistence, or pace; or
  - 4. Repeated episodes of decompensation, each of extended duration.

Listing 12.06 defines anxiety-related disorders whether anxiety is either the predominant disturbance or it is experienced if the individual attempts to master symptoms. The required level of severity for this disorder is met when the requirements in both A and B are satisfied, or when the requirements in both A and C are satisfied.

- A. Medically documented findings of at least one of the following:
  - 1. Generalized persistent anxiety accompanied by three out of four of the following signs or symptoms:
    - a. Motor tension; or
    - b. Autonomic hyperactivity; or

- c. Apprehensive expectation; or
- d. Vigilance and scanning; or
- 2. A persistent irrational fear of a specific object, activity, or situation which results in a compelling desire to avoid the dreaded object, activity, or situation; or
- 3. Recurrent severe panic attacks manifested by a sudden unpredictable onset of intense apprehension, fear, terror and sense of impending doom occurring on the average of at least once a week; or
- 4. Recurrent obsessions or compulsions which are a source of marked distress; or
- 5. Recurrent and intrusive recollections of a traumatic experience, which are a source of marked distress;

AND

- B. Resulting in at least two of the following:
  - 1. Marked restriction of activities of daily living; or
  - 2. Marked difficulties in maintaining social functioning; or
  - 3. Marked difficulties in maintaining concentration, persistence, or pace; or
  - 4. Repeated episodes of decompensation, each of extended duration.

OR

- C. Resulting in complete inability to function independently outside the area of one's home.

In this case, medical evidence documents that the Claimant has bipolar and depressive disorder however there was no objective medical findings of anxiety and/or ADHD. The Claimant was found markedly limited in her ability to understand, remember, and carry out detailed instructions, and in her ability to maintain attention and concentration for extended periods. There was no evidence of markedly limited restrictions of activities of daily living,

social functioning, or repeated episodes of decompensation. In review of the evidence, it is found that the medical documentation does meet the intent and severity requirement of Listing 12.04 and/or 12.06 as detailed above. In addition, the Claimant's intellectual functioning does not fall within the requirements of Listing 12.05. Further, there was no evidence that the Claimant's alleged intellectual functioning deficits were manifested before the age of 22. It should be noted that the record reflects that the Claimant has 82 college credits. Ultimately, the Claimant cannot be found disabled, or not disabled, under a listed impairment within 12.00. Accordingly, the Claimant's eligibility under Step 4 is considered. 20 CFR 416.905(a)

The fourth step in analyzing a disability claim requires an assessment of the Claimant's residual functional capacity ("RFC") and past relevant employment. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4)(iv) An individual is not disabled if he/she can perform past relevant work. *Id.*; 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3) Past relevant work is work that has been performed within the past 15 years that was a substantial gainful activity and that lasted long enough for the individual to learn the position. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(1) Vocational factors of age, education, and work experience, and whether the past relevant employment exists in significant numbers in the national economy is not considered. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3) RFC is assessed based on impairment(s), and any related symptoms, such as pain, which may cause physical and mental limitations that affect what can be done in a work setting. RFC is the most that can be done, despite the limitations.

To determine the physical demands (exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, jobs are classified as sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very heavy. 20 CFR 416.967 Sedentary work involves lifting of no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. 20 CFR 416.967(a) 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. *Id.* Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing up to 10 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(b) Even though 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. *Id.* To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, an individual must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. *Id.* An individual capable of light work is also capable of sedentary work, unless there are additionally limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. *Id.* Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(c) An individual capable of performing medium work is also capable of light and sedentary work. *Id.* Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(d) An individual capable of heavy work is also capable of medium, light, and sedentary work. *Id.* Finally, very heavy work involves lifting objects weighing more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing 50 pounds or more. 20 CFR 416.967(e) An individual capable of very heavy work is able to perform work under all categories. *Id.*

Limitations or restrictions which affect the ability to meet the demands of jobs other than strength demands (exertional requirements, i.e. sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling) are considered nonexertional. 20 CFR 416.969a(a) In considering whether an individual can perform past relevant work, a comparison of the individual's residual functional capacity with the demands of past relevant work. *Id.* If an individual can no longer

do past relevant work the same residual functional capacity assessment along with an individual's age, education, and work experience is considered to determine whether an individual can adjust to other work which exists in the national economy. *Id.* Examples of non-exertional limitations or restrictions include difficulty function due to nervousness, anxiousness, or depression; difficulty maintaining attention or concentration; difficulty understanding or remembering detailed instructions; difficulty in seeing or hearing; difficulty tolerating some physical feature(s) of certain work settings (i.e. can't tolerate dust or fumes); or difficulty performing the manipulative or postural functions of some work such as reaching, handling, stooping, climbing, crawling, or crouching. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(1)(i) – (vi) If the impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, only affect the ability to perform the non-exertional aspects of work-related activities, the rules in Appendix 2 do not direct factual conclusions of disabled or not disabled. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(2) The determination of whether disability exists is based upon the principles in the appropriate sections of the regulations, giving consideration to the rules for specific case situations in Appendix 2. *Id.*

Over the past 15 years, the Claimant worked as a cook, waitress, secretary, and residential house cleaner. In light of the Claimant's testimony and in consideration of the Occupational Code, the Claimant's past relevant work is considered unskilled, light work.

The Claimant testified that she can lift/carry approximately 5 pounds; is able to walk ½ block; is unable to squat; experiences dizziness when bending; and is able to sit for a couple of hours. The objective medical evidence restricts the Claimant to the equivalent of sedentary work. The Claimant's GAF ranged between 45 and 60. If the impairment or combination of impairments does not limit physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, it is not a severe impairment(s) and disability does not exist. 20 CFR 416.920 In consideration of the Claimant's

testimony, medical records, and current limitations, it is found that the Claimant is not able to return to past relevant work, thus the fifth step in the sequential evaluation is required.

In Step 5, an assessment of the individual's residual functional capacity and age, education, and work experience is considered to determine whether an adjustment to other work can be made. 20 CFR 416.920(4)(v) At the time of hearing, the Claimant, a high school graduate with some college, was 42 years old thus considered a younger individual for MA-P purposes. Disability is found disabled if an individual is unable to adjust to other work. *Id.* At this point in the analysis, the burden shifts from the Claimant to the Department to present proof that the Claimant has the residual capacity to substantial gainful employment. 20 CFR 416.960(2); *Richardson v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 735 F2d 962, 964 (CA 6, 1984). While a vocational expert is not required, a finding supported by substantial evidence that the individual has the vocational qualifications to perform specific jobs is needed to meet the burden. *O'Banner v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 587 F2d 321, 323 (CA 6, 1978). Medical-Vocational guidelines found at 20 CFR Subpart P, Appendix II, may be used to satisfy the burden of proving that the individual can perform specific jobs in the national economy. *Heckler v Campbell*, 461 US 458, 467 (1983); *Kirk v Secretary*, 667 F2d 524, 529 (CA 6, 1981) *cert den* 461 US 957 (1983).

In the record presented, the total impact caused by the combination of medical problems suffered by the Claimant must be considered. In doing so, it is found that the combination of the Claimant's physical and mental impairments have an affect on her ability to perform basic work activities, however, it is found that the Claimant is able to meet the physical and mental demands necessary to perform sedentary work as defined in 20 CFR 416.967(a). Although the Claimant was found disabled orthopedically, there were no objective findings that the Claimant was not

capable of performing sedentary work. After review of the entire record, and in consideration of the Medical-Vocational Guidelines [20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix II], specifically Rule 201.27, and finding no contradiction with the Claimant's mental impairments, it is found that the Claimant is not disabled for purposes of the MA-P program at Step 5.

The State Disability Assistance ("SDA") program, which provides financial assistance for disabled persons, was established by 2004 PA 344. DHS administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10 *et seq.* and Michigan Administrative Code ("MAC R") 400.3151 – 400.3180. Department policies are found in PAM, PEM, and PRM. A person is considered disabled for SDA purposes if the person has a physical or mental impairment which meets federal SSI disability standards for at least ninety days. PEM 261 Receipt of SSI or RSDI benefits based on disability or blindness, or the receipt of MA benefits based on disability or blindness (MA-P) automatically qualifies an individual as disabled for purposes of the SDA program. PEM 261

In this case, the record does not support a finding of disabled under the SSI disability standards. Accordingly, it is found that the Claimant is not disabled for purposes of the SDA program.

#### DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above finds of facts and conclusions of law, finds the Claimant not disabled for purposes of the State Disability Assistance program.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED:

The Department's determination is AFFIRMED.

*Colleen M. Mamelka*

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Colleen M. Mamelka  
Administrative Law Judge  
For Ishmael Ahmed, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 12/28/09

Date Mailed: 12/28/09

**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 the Circuit 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.

CMM/jlg

cc:

