

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: 2009-17697

Issue No: 2009-4031

Case No: [REDACTED]

Load No: [REDACTED]

Remand Hearing Date:

August 12, 2009

Wayne County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Jonathan W. Owens

REMAND 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 August 12, 2009. Claimant appeared and testified.

ISSUE

Whether the Department of Human Services (Department) properly determined that the Claimant is not "disabled" for purposes of the Medical Assistance (MA) program and State Disability Assistance (SDA)?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. On July 29, 2008, the Claimant representative applied for MA-P and SDA.
2. On October 20, 2008, MRT denied the Claimant's request.
3. On February 18, 2009, the Claimant submitted to the Department a request for hearing.
4. The Claimant is 54 years old.

5. The Claimant completed schooling up through the 9th grade.
6. The Claimant has employment experience as a security guard.
7. The Claimant's limitations have lasted or are expected to last 12 months or more.
8. The Claimant suffers with Seizures 2 -3 times a week, hypertension, fractured hips, sleep apnea, congestive heart failure.
9. The Claimant has the following symptoms: having seizures 2-3 times a week, blacks out when he has seizures and falls, has lost bowel control, chest pain, shortness of breath, tired and fatigued, uses a cane for walk- can only walk about a half block, can sit for about 10 minutes due to back pain, swelling in ankles and feet, elevates feet the majority of the day, can lift about 5 lbs, can stand for no longer than 5 minutes using can, extreme back pain and headaches, weak grip and grasp, slow mental thought process, problems with memory, gets lost and confused, needs help with all household chores, needs some help with bathroom activities due to problems with seizures and legs giving out, dizzy spells.
10. The Claimant has significant limitations on physical activities involving sitting, standing, walking, bending, lifting, and stooping.

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 (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) 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).

In order to receive MA benefits based upon disability or blindness,

claimant must be disabled or blind as defined in Title XVI of the Social Security Act (20 R 416.901). The Department, being authorized to make such disability determinations, utilizes the SSI definition of disability when making medical decisions on MA applications. MA-P (disability), also is known as Medicaid, which is a program designated to help public assistance claimants pay their medical expenses.

The law defines disability as the inability to do substantial gainful activity (SGA) 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).

Because disability must be determined on the basis of medical evidence, Federal regulations have delineated a set order entailing a step sequential process for evaluating physical or mental impairments. When claimant is found either disabled or not disabled at any point in the process, the claimant is not considered further.

Addressing the following steps:

The first step to be consider is whether the Claimant can perform Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) defined in 20 CFR 416.920(b). In this case, the Claimant is not working. Therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified a this step in the evaluation.

The second step to be determined in considering whether the Claimant is considered disabled is whether the severity of the impairment. In order to qualify the impairment must be considered severe which is defined as an impairment which significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities. Examples of these include:

1. Physical functions such as walking, standing, sitting, lifting, pushing, 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).

In this case, the Claimant's medical evidence of record supports a finding that Claimant has significant physical limitations that limit her ability to perform basic work activities such as sitting, standing, walking, bending, lifting, and stooping. Medical evidence has clearly established that the Claimant has an impairment (or combination of impairments) that has more than a minimal effect on the Claimant's work activities. See Social Security Rulings: 85-28, 88-13, and 82-63.

The Claimant has testified to limitations imposed because of the nature and severity of her medical conditions. Specifically his testimony indicating frequent problems with having seizures 2-3 times a week resulting in him blacking out and falling, he has lost bowel control, chest pain, shortness of breath, tired and fatigued, uses a cane for walk- can only walk about a half block, can sit for about 10 minutes due to back pain, swelling in ankles and feet, elevates feet the majority of the day, can lift about 5 lbs, can stand for no longer than 5 minutes using can, extreme back pain and headaches, weak grip and grasp, slow mental thought process, problems with memory, gets lost and confused, needs help with all household chores, needs some help with bathroom activities due to problems with seizures and legs giving out, dizzy spells. This ALJ finds that Claimant's subjective complaints are consistent with the objective medical evidence presented. This Administrative Law Judge does take into account claimant's complaints of pain in that the diagnoses do support the claims. Subjective complaints of pain where there are objectively established medical conditions that can reasonably be expected to produce the pain must be taken into account in determining a claimant's limitations.

Duncan v Secretary of HHS, 801 F2d 847, 853 (CA6, 1986); 20 CFR 404.1529, 416.929.

In the third step of the analysis, 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 does not support a finding that the 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.

Social Security Ruling 02-01 directs adjudicators to consider that the combined effects of obesity with other impairments may be greater than the non-obesity impairment alone. The National Institute of Health Clinical Guidelines for Obesity define three levels of obesity. Level I includes Body Mass Index (BMIs) of 30.0-34.9, Level II includes BMIs of 35.0-39.9 and Level III extreme obesity is considered over 40.0. Obesity at Level III represents a condition which creates the greatest risk for developing obesity related impairments. Claimant's weight was 345 lbs and he was 6'1 in height. The Claimant's obesity as measure by her BMI may be calculated using the Center for Disease Control and Prevention Body Mass Index calculation, found at: http://cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/adult_BMI/english_bmi_calculator/bmi_calculator.htm, it is possible to calculate the Claimant's BMI. The formula for calculating BMI is as follows: Calculate BMI by dividing weight in pounds by height in inches squared and multiplying by a conversion factor of 703. This formula as applied to the Claimant's height and weight yields a BMI 45.5, or Level III obesity. This level of obesity surely impacts the Claimant's Congestive heart failure and blood pressure. Social Security Ruling SSR-02 provides in pertinent part:

Because there is no listing for obesity, we will find that an individual with obesity "meets" the requirements of a listing if he or she has another impairment that, by itself, meets the requirements of a listing. We will also find that a listing is met if there is an impairment that, in combination with obesity, meets the requirements of a listing. For example, obesity may increase the severity of coexisting or related impairments to the extent that the combination of impairments meets the requirements of a listing. This is especially true of musculoskeletal, respiratory, and cardiovascular impairments. It may also be true for other coexisting or related impairments, including mental disorders.

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 clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescribed treatment, prognosis for a 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. 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 416.927.

The fourth step of the analysis to be considered is whether the Claimant has the ability to perform work previously performed by the Claimant within the past 15 years. The trier of fact must determine whether the impairment(s) presented prevent the Claimant from doing past relevant work. In the present case, the Claimant worked as a security guard. This position required being on his feet the majority of the work day. The Claimant was required to arrest persons and physically restrain them. The Claimant's impairments prevent him from performing these duties. This Administrative Law Judge finds based on the medical evidence and objective, physical, and psychological findings, that the Claimant is not capable of the physical or mental activities required to perform any such position. 20 CFR 416.920(e).

In the final step of the analysis, the trier of fact must determine: if the Claimant's impairment(s) prevent the 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 her limitations. 20 CFR 416.966.

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

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

Sedentary work. Sedentary work involves lifting no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. Although a sedentary job is defined as one which involves sitting, a certain amount of walking and standing is often necessary in carrying out job duties. Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. 20 CFR 416.967(a).

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

Medium work. Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. If someone can do medium work, we determine that he or she can also do sedentary and light work.

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20 CFR 416.967(c).

Heavy work. Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. If someone can do heavy work, we determine that he or she can also do medium, light, and sedentary work. 20 CFR 416.967(d).

See *Felton v DSS* 161 Mich. App 690, 696 (1987). Once the Claimant makes it to the final step of the analysis, the Claimant has already established a prima facie case of disability. *Richardson v Secretary of Health and Human Services*, 732 Fd2 962 (6th Cir, 1984). Moving forward the burden of proof rests with the state to prove by substantial evidence that the Claimant has the residual function capacity for substantial gainful activity.

Based on the medical evidence presented and Claimant's statements, this Administrative Law Judge finds that Claimant would be able to perform work on no more than a sedentary level. Claimant is an individual approaching advanced age. 20 CFR 416.963. Claimant's previous work has been unskilled. Federal Rule 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2 contains specific profiles for determining disability based on residual functional capacity and vocational profiles. Under Table 1, Rule 201.14 the claimant is disabled for the purposes of the Medical Assistance programs.

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program which provides financial assistance for disabled persons is established by 1939 PA 280, as amended. The Department of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.1 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 ninety days. 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. Other specific financial and non-financial eligibility criteria are found in PEM 261. The Claimant is eligible for SDA benefits based on the above finding of disability.

REMAND DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the Claimant is medically disabled as of July 2008.

Accordingly, the Department decision is hereby REVERSED and the Department is ORDERED to initiate a review of the application dated July 29, 2008, if not done previously, to determine Claimant's non-medical eligibility. The Department shall inform Claimant of the determination in writing. A review of this case shall be set for September 2010.

/s/
Jonathan W. Owens
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 8/24/09

Date Mailed: 8/26/09

NOTICE: The law provides that within 30 days of receipt of the above Rehearing Decision and Order, the claimant may appeal it to the circuit court for the county in which he/she lives.

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