

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: 2009-475
Issue No: 2009; 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
February 11, 2009
Wayne 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 February 11, 2009, in Detroit, Michigan. Claimant personally appeared and testified under oath.

The department was represented by Kendra Hall (Medical Contact Worker).

The Administrative Law Judge appeared by telephone from Lansing.

ISSUES

- (1) Did claimant establish a severe mental impairment expected to preclude him 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 him 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/SDA applicant (March 14, 2008) who was denied by SHRT (October 19, 2008) based on claimant's failure to establish an impairment which meets the department's severity and duration requirements.

(2) Claimant's vocational factors are: age—53; education—11th grade; post high school education—GED, currently attending [REDACTED] as a freshman; work experience—dishwasher for [REDACTED], journeyman and carpenter for 15 years.

(3) Claimant has not performed substantial gainful activity (SGA) since August 2008 when he worked as a dishwasher at a [REDACTED] store.

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

- (a) Difficulty walking due to numbness in legs and feet;
- (b) Numbness in feet;
- (c) Sleep dysfunction;
- (d) Back dysfunction;
- (e) Sinus dysfunction;

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

OBJECTIVE MEDICAL EVIDENCE ([REDACTED])

SHRT decided that claimant is able to perform normal work activities. SHRT evaluated claimant's eligibility using Listings 1.02, 1.04. SHRT decided claimant does not meet any of these listings.

SHRT denied claimant's MA-P/SDA benefits because he failed to establish a severe impairment under 20 CFR 416.920.

(6) Claimant lives in a shelter and performs the following Activities of Daily Living (ADLs): dressing, bathing, cooking, dishwashing, light cleaning, mopping, vacuuming, laundry

and grocery shopping. Claimant does not use a cane, walker, wheelchair or shower stool.

Claimant does not wear braces. Claimant does not receive in-patient hospital services in [REDACTED] or

[REDACTED].

(7) Claimant does not have a valid driver's license. Claimant is computer literate.

(8) The following medical records are persuasive:

- (a) A [REDACTED] Medical Examination Report (DHS-49) was reviewed.

The physician provided the following diagnoses:

- (1) Restless leg syndrome;
- (2) Low back pain;
- (3) Alcohol abuse.

The physician reported the following limitations:

- (1) Claimant is able to lift up to 20 pounds frequently. He has no limitations on his ability to stand/walk. Claimant has normal use of his hands/arms and no limitations with his feet/legs.

(9) There are no probative psychological reports in the record. Claimant does not allege a psychological impairment as the basis for his disability.

(10) The probative medical evidence does not establish an acute (exertional) physical impairment, or combination of impairments, expected to prevent claimant from performing all customary work functions for the required period of time. Claimant's restless legs syndrome and low back pain do not preclude him from performing normal work activities.

(11) Claimant has not applied for federal disability benefits with the Social Security Administration.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

CLAIMANT'S POSITION

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

Claimant is requesting benefits because he is unable to pay his bills and he would like medical attention to fix his back so he can go back to work as a carpenter.

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The department thinks that claimant has normal work capacity.

The department evaluated claimant's impairments using SSI Listings 1.02 and 1.04. Claimant does not qualify for benefits under any of the Listings.

LEGAL BASIS

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 the preponderance of the medical evidence in the record that his mental/physical impairments meet the department's definition of disability for MA-P/SDA purposes. PEM 260/261. "Disability" is defined by MA-P/SDA standards as 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, he 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, educational 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 determined the SSI definition of severity/duration.

Claimant must establish an impairment which is expected to result in death, has existed for at least 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).

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 claimant meets the Listing of Impairments in the SSI Regulations. Claimant does not allege disability based on the Listings. However, SHRT evaluated claimant's eligibility based on SSI Listings 1.02 and 1.04. Claimant does not meet these 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 his previous work. Claimant last worked as a dishwasher at a [REDACTED]. This was medium work.

The medical evidence of record establishes that claimant has restless leg syndrome and low back pain. However, these diagnoses do not prevent him from returning to his previous work as a dishwasher.

Therefore, claimant does not meet the Step 4 disability category.

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 a preponderance of the medical/psychological evidence in the record, that his 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 his restless leg syndrome and numbness in his feet. The medical evidence corroborates claimant's allegations of restless leg syndrome. However, the record does not establish this claimant is totally unable to work based on restless legs. Finally, claimant testified that a major impairment to his return to work is his back pain secondary to leg dysfunction/restless leg syndrome. 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 his pain is profound and credible, without a 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 his back dysfunction, sleep dysfunction and restless leg. Claimant currently performs an extensive list of activities of daily living, has an active social life with students at [REDACTED] and is computer literate.

In addition, claimant is currently a client of the [REDACTED] program and is receiving training in order to perform sedentary work.

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). In this capacity, he is physically able to work as a ticket taker for a theater, as a parking lot attendant, as a greeter for [REDACTED] and as a telemarketing representative.

Based on 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: March 18, 2009

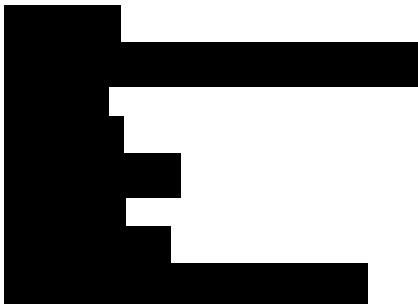
Date Mailed: March 18, 2009

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

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