

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: 2009-739  
Issue No: 2009  
Case No: [REDACTED]  
Load No: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date:  
December 4, 2008  
Ionia County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Jana A. Bachman

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 December 4, 2008.

ISSUE

Whether the Department of Human Services (department) properly determined that claimant has not established disability for purposes of Medical Assistance (MA).

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

- (1) July 8, 2008, claimant applied for MA and State Disability Assistance (SDA). Claimant submitted medical records for department consideration.
- (2) August 20, 2008, the Medical Review Team denied claimant's application for MA. Department Exhibit (Department) A.

(3) August 22, 2008, the department sent claimant written notice that the application was denied.

(4) September 22, 2008, the department received claimant's timely request for hearing.

(5) October 9, 2008, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) denied claimant's application. Department B.

(6) December 4, 2008, the telephone hearing was held.

(7) Claimant asserts disability based on failed back surgery, depression, endometriosis, urinary infection, and kidney stones.

(8) Claimant testified at hearing. Claimant is 32 years old, 5'7" tall, and weighs 175 pounds. Claimant completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade and has training as a medical assistant. Claimant is able to read, write, and perform basic math. Claimant has a driver's license but does not drive due to side effects from her medication. She is able to care for her needs at home.

(9) Claimant's past relevant employment has been credential coordinator at a hospital, a medical assistant, and in customer service.

(10) November 16, 2007, claimant was admitted to hospital complaining of depression. Psychiatric evaluation resulted in AXIS I diagnosis of major depressive disorder, recurrent, severe, without psychotic features. At exam, claimant was generally cooperative. Eye contact was good. Speech had normal volume and rate. Affect was restricted. Mood was depressed. Thought processes were goal directed and associations were logical. Claimant endorsed suicidal ideation; denied homicidal ideation and auditory/visual hallucinations. She was alert and oriented X4. Fund of knowledge was adequate. Memory for recent and remote events was intact. Concentration was adequate. Abstract thinking was good. Judgment and

insight were fair. Claimant was treated in hospital until November 19, 2007, when she was discharged. Department A, pages 4-6. It is noted that claimant was also hospitalized due to depression in 2004. Department A, pages 7-10.

(11) May 23, 2008, claimant underwent lumbar facetectomy L4-5 with decompression of exiting L4 and transversing L5 nerve root; instrumentation of L4-5 bilateral; posterolateral arthrodesis L4-5; interbody arthrodesis L4-5; and insertion of cage interbody Peak spacer L4-5. Department A, pages 55-61. Claimant had undergone treatment for lower back pain at a pain clinic for some months previous to surgery. Department A, pages 92-95. June 5, 2008 treatment notes indicate claimant fell and underwent multiple x-rays of her spine. The prepared report indicates no acute osseous pathology and postoperative changes to L4-L5. Department A, page 38. On June 10, 2008, physician treatment notes indicate claimant is using a walker to ambulate. She has no edema and no focalizing lateralizing signs. Muscle testing is 5/5 and there is no clonus or hyperreflexia in her extremities. Gait is not ataxic. Department A, page 31.

(12) May 16, 2008, claimant underwent EKG that revealed sinus rhythm with no acute ST or T wave changes. Department A, page 26. June 25, 2008, claimant underwent additional cardiac testing that revealed normal carotid bifurcations, bilaterally with stenosis of 0 to 15 % in the internal carotid arteries and antegrade flow in both vertebral arteries. Department A, page 46.

### 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).

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 do 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).

For mental disorders, severity is assessed in terms of the functional limitations imposed by the impairment. Functional limitations are assessed using the criteria in paragraph (B) of the listings for mental disorders (descriptions of restrictions of activities of daily living, social functioning; concentration, persistence, or pace; and ability to tolerate increased mental demands associated with competitive work).... 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(C).

If an individual fails to cooperate by appearing for a physical or mental examination by a certain date without good cause, there will not be a finding of disability. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(4)(ii).

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If an individual fails to cooperate by appearing for a physical or mental examination by a certain date without good cause, there will not be a finding of disability. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(4)(ii).

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).

At Step 1, claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity and so is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence of record indicates that claimant has undergone surgery and pain management treatment for degenerative disc disease. June 10, 2008, following May 23, 2008, facetectomy and insertion of cage interbody Peak spacer claimant was using a walker to ambulate. She had no edema and no focalizing lateralizing signs. Muscle testing was 5/5 and there was no clonus or hyperreflexia in her extremities. Gait was not ataxic. Finding of Fact 11. Claimant's cardiac function is within normal limits. Finding of Fact 12.

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence of record establishes that claimant was hospitalized for three days during November 2007 due to depression and suicidal ideation. Psychological assessment revealed that claimant was generally cooperative, alert, and oriented X4. Eye contact was good. Speech had normal volume and rate. Affect was restricted. Mood was depressed. Thought processes were goal directed and associations were logical. Claimant endorsed suicidal ideation; denied homicidal ideation and auditory/visual hallucinations. Fund of knowledge was adequate. Memory for recent and remote events was intact. Concentration was adequate. Abstract thinking was good. Judgment and insight were fair. Claimant was previously hospitalized for depression 2004. Finding of Fact 10.

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence of record is not sufficient to establish that claimant has severe physical and/or cognitive impairments that have lasted or are expected to last 12 months or more and prevent employment at any job for 12 months or more. Therefore, claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 2.

At Step 3, claimant's impairments do not rise to the level necessary to be specifically disabling by law.

At Step 4, claimant's past relevant employment has been as a credential coordinator, medical assistant, and in customer service. The objective medical evidence of record does not

establish severe physical and/or cognitive deficits of the required duration. See discussion at Step 2, above. Finding of Fact 9-12.

At Step 4, the objective medical evidence of record is not sufficient to establish that claimant has functional impairments that prevent claimant, for a period of 12 months or more, from engaging in a full range of duties required by claimant's past relevant employment. Therefore, claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 4.

Although claimant is disqualified at Step 4, the Administrative Law Judge will proceed through the Step 5 sequential evaluation process, *arguendo*, to determine whether claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous work than required by claimant's past relevant employment.

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. 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).

At Step 5, the objective medical evidence of record indicates that claimant has been treated for depression. Psychological assessment at time of hospitalization in November 2007 did not reveal severe, ongoing cognitive impairments. Claimant has had back surgery and implantation of cage interbody Peak spacer. Two weeks post-surgery, she had no edema and no focalizing lateralizing signs. Muscle testing was 5/5 and there was no clonus or hyperreflexia in her extremities. Claimant was ambulating with use of a walker. See discussion at Step 2, above. Finding of Fact 10-12.

At Step 5, the objective medical evidence of record is sufficient to establish that claimant retains the residual functional capacity to perform at least sedentary work activities. Considering claimant's Vocational Profile (younger individual, high school education, and history of skilled and unskilled work) and relying on Vocational Rule 201.26, claimant is not disabled. Therefore, claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 5.

Claimant does not meet the federal statutory requirements to qualify for disability. Therefore, claimant does not qualify for Medical Assistance based on disability and the department properly denied claimant's application.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that claimant has not established disability for Medical Assistance.

Accordingly, the department's action is **HEREBY UPHOLD**.

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
Jana A. Bachman  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Ismael Ahmed, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Mailed: \_\_\_\_\_

**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.

JAB/db

cc:

[Redacted list of recipients]