

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.: 2009-9605
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Load No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
March 2, 2009
Wayne County DHS (82)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Linda Steadley Schwarb

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 March 2, 2009. The claimant appeared and testified. The claimant was represented by [REDACTED]. Following the hearing, the record was kept open for receipt of additional medical evidence. Additional documents were received and reviewed.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (DHS or department) properly determine that claimant is not "disabled" for purposes of the Medical Assistance (MA-P) program?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

- (1) On August 25, 2008, an application was filed on claimant's behalf for MA-P benefits. The application did not request retroactive medical coverage.

- (2) On September 2, 2008, the department denied claimant's application for benefits based upon the belief that claimant did not meet the requisite disability criteria.
- (3) On November 19, 2008, a hearing request was filed to protest the department's determination.
- (4) Claimant, age 45, has a high school education.
- (5) Claimant last worked in July 2008 as a security guard. Claimant has also performed relevant work as an assembly line worker. Claimant's relevant work history consists exclusively of unskilled work activities.
- (6) Claimant has a history of idiopathic thrombocytopenia purpura (ITP), alcohol abuse, and uterine fibroids.
- (7) Claimant was hospitalized [REDACTED] through [REDACTED] as a result of right flank pain. Claimant's discharge diagnosis was right renal infarct, ITP, aortic mural thrombus, coagulopathy.
- (8) Claimant sought emergency room treatment on [REDACTED] for vaginal bleeding.
- (9) Claimant sought emergency room treatment on [REDACTED] for vaginal bleeding secondary to her fibroid uterus.
- (10) Claimant received emergency room treatment on [REDACTED] for menometrorrhagia.
- (11) Claimant suffers from ITP, uterine fibroids, alcohol abuse, and major depressive disorder, single episode. Claimant's GAF score on [REDACTED] was 50 – 55.
- (12) Claimant has severe limitations upon her ability to walk or stand for prolonged periods of time and lift extremely heavy objects. Claimant's limitations have last or are expected to last for 12 months or more.

- (13) Claimant's complaints and allegations concerning her impairments and limitations, when considered in light of all objective medical evidence, as well as the record as a whole, reflect an individual who has the physical and mental capacity to engage in simple, unskilled, light or sedentary work activities on a regular and continuing basis.

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).

Federal regulations require that the department use the same operative definition for "disabled" as used for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. 42 CFR 435.540(a).

"Disability" is:

...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

In general, the claimant has the responsibility to prove that she is disabled. Claimant's impairment must result from anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which can be shown by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques. A physical or mental impairment must be established by medical evidence consisting of signs, symptoms, and laboratory findings, not only claimant's

statement of symptoms. 20 CFR 416.908; 20 CFR 416.927. Proof must be in the form of medical evidence showing that the claimant has an impairment and the nature and extent of its severity. 20 CFR 416.912. Information must be sufficient to enable a determination as to the nature and limiting effects of the impairment for the period in question, the probable duration of the impairment and the residual functional capacity to do work-related physical and mental activities. 20 CFR 416.913.

In determining whether an individual is disabled, 20 CFR 416.920 requires the trier of fact to follow a sequential evaluation process by which current work activity, the severity of the impairment(s), residual functional capacity, and vocational factors (i.e., age, education, and work experience) are assessed in that order. When a determination that an individual is or is not disabled can be made at any step in the sequential evaluation, evaluation under a subsequent step is not necessary.

First, the trier of fact must determine if the individual is working and if the work is substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.920(b). In this case, claimant is not working. Therefore, claimant may not be disqualified for MA at the step in the sequential evaluation process.

Secondly, in order to be considered disabled for purposes of MA, a person must have a severe impairment. 20 CFR 416.920(c). A severe impairment is an impairment which significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities. Basic work activities mean 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).

The purpose of the second step in the sequential evaluation process is to screen out claims lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v. Bowen* 880 F2d 860, 862 (6th Cir, 1988). As a result, the department may only screen out claims at this level which are “totally groundless” solely from a medical standpoint. The *Higgs* court used the severity requirement as a “*de minimus* hurdle” in the disability determination. The *de minimus* standard is a provision of a law that allows the court to disregard trifling matters.

In this case, claimant has presented the required medical data and evidence necessary to support a finding that claimant has significant physical limitations upon claimant’s ability to perform basic work activities such as walking and standing for long periods of time and lifting extremely heavy objects. Medical evidence has clearly established that claimant has an impairment (or combination of impairments) that has more than a minimal effect on claimant’s work activities. See Social Security Rulings 85-28, 88-13, and 82-63.

In the third step of the sequential consideration 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. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant’s medical record will not support a finding that 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.

Accordingly, claimant cannot be found to be disabled based upon medical evidence alone.

20 CFR 416.920(d).

In the fourth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment(s) prevents claimant from doing past relevant work. 20 CFR 416.920(e). After careful consideration of the entire hearing record, the undersigned finds that claimant does have the residual functional capacity to engage in her past work as a security guard. The record indicates that claimant suffers from ITP, uterine fibroids, alcohol abuse, and depression. The record further suggests that these have been ongoing issues for claimant for some time. Claimant was clearly working as a security guard with these conditions. She was hospitalized in August 2008 and thereafter had 3 emergency visits. The record does not support a finding that claimant is no longer capable of performing her past work as a security guard. As such, claimant may not be found disabled for purposes of MA. But, even if claimant were no longer capable of work as a security guard, she would be found capable of performing other work.

In the fifth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment(s) prevents 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 his/her limitations. 20 CFR 416.966.

See *Felton v DSS* 161 Mich. App 690, 696 (1987).

This Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant's residual functional capacity for work activities on a regular and continuing basis does include the ability to meet the physical and mental demands required to perform simple, unskilled light work activities. Light work is defined as follows:

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).

There is insufficient objective medical evidence, signs, and symptoms to support a determination that claimant is incapable of performing the physical and mental activities necessary for a wide range of light work. Claimant was hospitalized from [REDACTED] through [REDACTED] as a result of a right renal infarct, ITP, aortic mural thrombus, and coagulopathy. Thereafter, she had 3 emergency visits as a result of vaginal bleeding secondary to uterine fibroids. Records from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] dated [REDACTED] provide a current diagnosis of ETOH abuse and major depressive disorder, single episode. Claimant's current GAF score was said to be 50 – 55. A review of claimant's hospital records and available records from treating sources have failed to establish limitations which would compromise claimant's ability to perform a wide range of light work activities on a regular and continuing basis. The record fails to support the position that claimant is incapable of light work activities. Considering that claimant, at age 45, is a younger individual, has a high school education, has an unskilled work history, and has a work capacity for light work, this Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant's impairments do not prevent her from doing other work. As a guide, see 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Table 2, Rule 202.20. Accordingly, the undersigned must find that claimant is not presently disabled for purposes of

2009-9605/LSS

cc:

