

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: 2010-1754  
Issue No: 2009; 4031  
Case No: [REDACTED]  
Load No: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date:  
December 10, 2009  
Wayne County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Landis Y. Lain

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 10, 2009. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (the department) properly deny claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P) 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 material fact:

(1) On May 15, 2009, claimant filed an application for Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance benefits as well as retroactive Medical Assistance benefits, alleging disability.

(2) On July 27, 2009, the Medical Review Team denied claimant's application stating that claimant's impairments were non-exertional.

(3) On July 30, 2009, the department caseworker sent claimant notice that her application was denied.

(4) On August 25, 2009, claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.

(5) On October 19, 2009, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating that claimant is capable of performing unskilled work per 20 CFR 416.968(a).

(6) Claimant is a 45-year-old woman whose birth date is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5' 1" tall and weighs 160 pounds. Claimant attended the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and has no GED. Claimant is able to read and write and can add, subtract, and count money.

(7) Claimant last worked 2002 for a temporary service washing walls and doing different jobs.

(8) Claimant alleges as disabling impairments: right arm arthritis, right leg pain, depression, and paranoia.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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).

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).

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).

At Step 1, claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity and has not worked since 2002. Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

The objective medical evidence in the record indicates that a [REDACTED] psychiatric report dated [REDACTED] indicates that claimant stood 5' 1" tall and weighed 162 pounds. She was observed to be ambulatory. Her gait and posture appeared to be within normal limits. Her hygiene and grooming appeared to be adequate. She maintained fairly good eye contact. She appeared to be in fairly good contact with reality at the time of examination despite her hallucinations and feeling paranoid. She indicated that she has low self-esteem. She stated, "I don't have nothing, I can't take of myself, and I depend on family." She responded to questions spontaneously. She did not exhibit any pressured speech or thought blocking. She indicated she experiences hallucinations and she feels paranoid. She said her sleep, appetite, and weight fluctuate and has problems with concentration and memory. She also indicated that she feels sad and has had suicidal attempts in the past. She has had psychiatric hospitalizations as well. She did not show any emotions during the evaluation. Claimant gave the date at July 1, 1999. She indicated that the city was Detroit. She was asked to repeat 3 and 4 digits forward but was not able to do them backward. She was able to recall 2 of 3 objects in 3 minutes. She gave her birth date as [REDACTED]. She was asked to name three cities and she said Detroit, Alabama and Dayton. She was not able to give any current events. Her calculations were  $25-10=15$  and

13+9=22. When asked to interrupt the proverb, “Don’t cry over spilled milk”, she initially said “I don’t know what it means” and then she said it means, “You don’t cry.” For similarities and differences, when asked how a bush and a tree are alike she said they are green. When asked how they are difference she stated in their stems. When asked what she would do if she discovered a fire in a theater she said, “I would leave.” Based on the examination, it appeared that claimant suffered from mental illness indicating she experiences hallucinations, responding to voices and gets paranoid. Her diagnosis was schizophrenia, paranoid type; nicotine dependence; history of alcohol and crack cocaine abuse; low back problems; arthritis of the right ankle and right shoulder; and vision problems. Her GAF was 50 and her prognosis was guarded. It was felt she continued to need treatment, therapeutic intervention, and support services. (pp. 7-8)

A [REDACTED] Psychiatric/Psychological Examination Report indicates that claimant’s GAF is 31-34 and she was diagnosed with major depression disorder, recurrent and severe with psychotic features. (pp. 14-15)

A Mental Residual Functional Capacity Assessment dated [REDACTED] indicates that claimant was markedly limited in the ability to carry out detailed instructions but was only moderately limited in most other areas. (pp. 16-17)

Claimant testified on the record that she can walk one mile, stand for 30 minutes, sit with no limits, and can carry 10 pounds. Claimant testified that she is able to shower and dress herself, but not squat or bend at the waist. Claimant testified she can tie her shoes and touch her toes and her level of pain with medication is a 9 and with medication is a 5. Claimant testified that she does smoke a half a pack of cigarettes per day and her doctor has told her to quit and she’s not in a smoking cessation program. Claimant testified that she stopped drinking alcohol last year and that she stopped using cocaine and weed five years ago. Claimant testified that she is depressed

because her mother, cousin, and child died. Claimant testified that she doesn't drive but she catches the bus or gets a ride and that she does cook one time per week and cooks things like pork chops, chicken, and hotdogs. Claimant testified that she doesn't grocery shop because she doesn't like to be around people and she does clean her home and usually cleans her room.

Claimant testified that she lives with her boyfriend, her son, and her brother and that she is single with no children under 18. Claimant does receive the Adult Medical Program and Food Assistance Program benefits.

At Step 2, claimant has the burden of proof of establishing that she has a severely restrictive physical or mental impairment that has lasted or is expected to last for the duration of at least 12 months. There is no objective clinical medical evidence in the record that claimant suffers a severely restrictive physical impairment. There is insufficient objective clinical medical/psychiatric evidence recorded in the file to indicate that claimant has a severely restrictive mental impairment. Claimant has reports of pain in multiple areas of her body; however, there are no corresponding clinical findings that support the reports of symptoms and limitations made by the claimant. There is no medical finding that claimant has any muscle atrophy or trauma, abnormality or injury that is consistent with a deteriorating condition. Reported symptoms are an insufficient basis upon which a finding that claimant has met the evidentiary burden of proof can be made. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the medical record is insufficient to establish claimant has a severely restrictive physical impairment.

There is insufficient objective medical/psychiatric evidence in the record indicating claimant suffers mental limitations resulting from her reportedly depressed state.

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).

The Mental Residual Functional Capacity Assessment in the record indicates that claimant is only moderately limited in most areas and only markedly limited in one area. Claimant was able to answer all the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. Claimant was oriented to time, person, and place during the hearing and during her medical visits. The evidentiary record is insufficient to find that claimant suffers a severely restrictive mental impairment. There is insufficient objective medical/psychiatric evidence contained in the file of depression or a cognitive dysfunction that is so severe that it would prevent claimant from working at any job. Also it does not appear that claimant has any severe restrictions of activities of daily living. Even though she had stated that she doesn't like to go out and doesn't like to be around people, there doesn't appear to be any objective medical findings which support claimant's statements. For these reasons, this Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant has failed to meet her burden of proof at Step 2. Claimant must be denied benefits at this step based upon her failure to meet the evidentiary burden.

If claimant had not been denied at Step 2, the analysis would proceed to Step 3 where the medical evidence of claimant's condition does not give rise to a finding that she would meet a statutory listing in the code of federal regulations.

If claimant had not already been denied at Step 2, this Administrative Law Judge would have to deny her again at Step 4 based upon her ability to perform her past relevant work. Claimant's past relevant work was light work. As a person working for a temporary service, she was able to perform the duties of the job. There is insufficient objective medical evidence upon

which this Administrative Law Judge could base a finding that claimant is unable to perform work in which she has engaged in, in the past. Therefore, if claimant had not already been denied at Step 2, she would be denied again at Step 4.

The Administrative Law Judge will continue to proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine whether or not claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in her prior jobs.

At Step 5, the burden of proof shifts to the department to establish that claimant does not have residual functional capacity.

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).

Claimant has submitted insufficient objective medical evidence that she lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in her prior employment or that she is physically unable to do medium, light or sedentary tasks if demanded of her.

Claimant's activities of daily living do not appear to be very limited and she should be able to perform at least light or sedentary work even with her impairments. Claimant has failed to provide the necessary objective medical evidence to establish that she has a severe impairment of combination of impairments which prevent her from performing any level of work for a period of 12 months. The claimant's testimony as to her limitations indicates that she should be able to perform at least light or sedentary work.

Claimant is not in compliance with her treatment program as she does continue to smoke cigarettes despite the fact that her doctor has told her to quit.

If an individual fails to follow prescribed treatment which would be expected to restore their ability to engage in substantial activity without good cause, there will not be a finding of disability.... 20 CFR 416.994(b)(4)(iv).

The Federal Regulations at 20 CFR 404.1535 speak to the determination of whether Drug Addiction and Alcoholism (DAA) is material to a person's disability and when benefits will or will not be approved. The regulations require the disability analysis be completed prior to

a determination of whether a person's drug and alcohol use is material. It is only when a person meets the disability criterion, as set forth in the regulations, that the issue of materiality becomes relevant. In such cases, the regulations require a sixth step to determine the materiality of DAA to a person's disability.

When the record contains evidence of DAA, a determination must be made whether or not the person would continue to be disabled if the individual stopped using drugs or alcohol. The trier of fact must determine what, if any, of the physical or mental limitations would remain if the person were to stop the use of the drugs or alcohol and whether any of these remaining limitations would be disabling.

Claimant's testimony and the information indicate that claimant has a history of alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse. Applicable hearing is the Drug Abuse and Alcohol (DA&A) Legislation, Public Law 104-121, Section 105. The law indicates that individuals are not eligible and/or are not disabled where drug addiction or alcoholism is a contributing factor material to the determination of disability. After a careful review of the credible and substantial evidence on the whole record, this Administrative Law Judge finds that even if claimant were to be considered disabled, she does not meet the statutory disability definition under the authority of the DA&A Legislation because her substance abuse is material to her alleged impairment and alleged disability.

Claimant's complaints of pain, while profound and credible, are out of proportion to the objective medical evidence contained in the file as it relates to claimant's ability to perform work. In addition, claimant did testify that she does receive some relief from her pain medication. Claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 5 based upon the fact that she has not established by objective medical evidence that she cannot perform light or sedentary

work even with her impairments. Under the Medical-Vocational guidelines, a younger individual (age 45), with a less than high school education and an unskilled work history who is limited to light work is not considered disabled.

The department's Program Eligibility Manual contains the following policy statements and instructions for caseworkers regarding the State Disability Assistance program: to receive State Disability Assistance, a person must be disabled, caring for a disabled person or age 65 or older. PEM, Item 261, page 1. Because the claimant does not meet the definition of disabled under the MA-P program and because the evidence of record does not establish that claimant is unable to work for a period exceeding 90 days, the claimant does not meet the disability criteria for State Disability Assistance benefits either.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department has appropriately established on the record that it was acting in compliance with department policy when it denied claimant's application for Medical Assistance, retroactive Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance benefits. The claimant should be able to perform a wide range of light or sedentary work even with her impairments. The department has established its case by a preponderance of the evidence.

Accordingly, the department's decision is AFFIRMED.

/s/ \_\_\_\_\_  
Landis Y. Lain  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Ismael Ahmed, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: January 19, 2010

Date Mailed: January 19, 2010

**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 mailing 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.

LYL/vmc

cc:

