

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: 2010-17606

Issue No: 2009/4031

Case No: [REDACTED]

Load No: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date:

March 18, 2010

Muskegon County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Marlene B. Magyar

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 March 18, 2010. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

ISSUE

Did the department properly determine claimant is not disabled by Medicaid (MA) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) eligibility standards?

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 a single, 27-year-old male with a general equivalency diploma (GED) and a valid driver's license who stands 5'11" tall and is medically obese at 232 pounds (BMI=32.4); he is right hand dominant, per self report.

(2) Claimant has resided with his mother since his October 20, 2009 prison out-date after serving 5 years; he anticipates his parole will end in October 2010.

(3) On October 26, 2009 (six days after prison release), claimant filed a disability-based application for medical coverage (MA) and a monthly cash grant (SDA).

(4) Claimant's past relevant work history includes construction and auto detailing (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 202).

(5) At claimant's disability appeal hearing on March 18, 2010, he stated he also has experience as a private disc jockey for hire, but he has not booked any parties yet or obtained work anywhere else despite actively seeking employment on-line and at [REDACTED]

(6) In February 2002 (before incarceration), claimant was involved in a single car motor vehicle accident which resulted in multiple bilateral lower extremity fractures necessitating several corrective orthopedic surgeries (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 66, 173-174, 179-182 and 186-187).

(7) By May 17, 2002 (three months post-injury), claimant's medial records indicate he was doing quite well, not having much pain and his fractures were healing as expected per updated x-rays (Department Exhibit #1, pg 69).

(8) Claimant's treating orthopedic specialist offered physical therapy but claimant preferred to work on his own; consequently, he was advised to weightbear as tolerated on his left lower extremity and to continue using a walker or crutches for off-loading on his right lower extremity (Department Exhibit #1, pg 69).

(9) By November 2002, claimant was fully weightbearing on his left and right lower extremities despite his orthopedist's admonition not to put any weight on the right; additionally,

claimant continued to smoke despite his surgeon's strong medical recommendation to the contrary during claimant's surgical and post-operative phases (Department Exhibit #1, pg 73).

(10) On January 6, 2003, claimant underwent right ankle hardware removal and right ankle arthrodesis via iliac crest bone grafting; by April 16, 2003, claimant's surgical follow-up notes indicate he was fully weightbearing and walking around in his cast (Department Exhibit 31, pg 77).

(11) Claimant's July 16, 2003 x-rays (six months post fusion) reveal his fusion was healed and the alignment was good (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 78).

(12) In February 2004, claimant's treating orthopedist indicated claimant had not been seen there since July 16, 2003, but based on claimant's treatment history this specialist concluded claimant no longer needed assistance with self cares or basic work activities, and he was capable of at least sedentary work activities at that time (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 48 and 49).

(13) At some point in 2004, claimant was incarcerated, per his hearing testimony (See also Finding of Fact #2 above).

(14) When claimant filed his currently disputed application his treating doctor completed a Medical Examination Report (DHS-49) dated December 10, 2009, which assesses claimant with the residual functional capacity to engage in light work, despite his permanent left lower extremity residuals (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 3-5).

(15) Claimant stated at his disability appeal hearing he continues to take [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for pain management, as well as [REDACTED] for self-reported depression and a sleep aid (Ambien), as prescribed by his current treating physician at [REDACTED]

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).

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

The SDA program differs from the federal MA regulations in that the durational requirement is 90 days. This means that the person's impairments must meet the SSI disability standards for 90 days in order for that person to be eligible for SDA benefits.

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 his or her medical

history, clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescribed treatment, prognosis for 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. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.908 and 20 CFR 416.929. By the same token, 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 416.929.

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).

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).

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).

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).

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

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).

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 is not disqualified from receiving MA/SDA at Step 1, because he has not been gainfully employed in several years (See Finding of Fact #2 and #5 above).

At Step 2, claimant's diagnosed residuals from his lower extremity fractures at maximum medical improvement have left him with some range of motion limitations and pain. However, it must be noted no severe mental impairments have been shown, and claimant's remaining symptoms appear fully capable of adequate management with his current prescription medications, as long as medication compliance is maintained.

Furthermore, it must be noted the law does not require an applicant to be completely symptom free before a finding of lack of disability can be rendered. In fact, if an applicant's symptoms can be managed to the point where substantial gainful employment can be achieved, a finding of not disabled must be rendered. Nevertheless, claimant's medically managed physical impairments meet the *de minimus* level of severity and duration required for further analysis.

At Step 3, the medical evidence on this record does not support a finding that claimant's diagnosed impairments, standing alone or combined, are severe enough to meet or equal any specifically listed impairments; consequently, the analysis must continue.

At Step 4, the record supports claimant's contention he cannot return to construction or auto detailing work because those jobs require excessive walking, bending, lifting, standing, etc., which may exacerbate claimant's pain levels and/or cause additional injury. As such, this analysis must continue.

At Step 5, an applicant's age, education and previous work experience (vocational factors) must be assessed in light of the documented impairments. Claimant is a young individual with a high school education and an unskilled work history. Consequently, at Step 5, this

Administrative Law Judge finds, from the medial evidence of record, that claimant retains the residual functional capacity to perform sedentary or light work, as those terms are defined above.

Claimant's biggest barriers to employability appear to be his felony record in combination with his lack of recent connection to the competitive workforce. Claimant should be referred to [REDACTED] for assistance with job training and/or placement consistent with his skills, interests and abilities. Claimant is not disabled under the MA/SDA definitions, because he can return to other sedentary or light work, as directed by Medical-Vocational Rules 201.27 and 202.20.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the department properly determined claimant is not disabled by MA/SDA eligibility standards.

Accordingly, the department's action is AFFIRMED.

/s/ _____
Marlene B. Magyar
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: May 24, 2010

Date Mailed: May 25, 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 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.

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