

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: 2010-1880  
Issue No: 2009; 4031  
Case No: [REDACTED]  
Load No: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date:  
December 8, 2009  
Saginaw 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, an in-person hearing was held on December 8, 2009. Claimant personally appeared and testified. Claimant was represented at the hearing by [REDACTED]

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 March 20, 2009, claimant filed an application for Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance benefits alleging disability.

(2) On May 5, 2009, the Medical Review Team denied claimant's application stating that claimant was denied based upon substance abuse and that he could perform other work.

(3) On May 9, 2009, the department caseworker sent claimant notice that his application was denied.

(4) On July 20, 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 in its analysis and recommendation: The medical evidence does not support any physical limitations. From a psychiatric view, the claimant carries a diagnosis of substance abuse. There are several other signs related to this condition which would most likely be gone if the claimant were to stop abusing substances. Unable to assess this though, as claimant does continue to abuse substances. Public Law 104-121 is cited due to the materiality of drug and alcohol abuse. This denial applies to Medicaid-P, retroactive Medicaid-P, and State Disability. Listings 1.04 and 12.04/09 were considered in this decision.

(6) The hearing was held on December 8, 2009. At the hearing, claimant waived the time periods and requested to submit additional medical information.

(7) Additional medical information was submitted and sent to the State Hearing Review Team on December 9, 2009.

(8) On December 14, 2009, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating in its analysis and recommendation: The claimant has a history of substance abuse and was admitted in [REDACTED] for possible overdose. His drug screen was positive for benzos, cocaine, and opiates. He had acute psychosis at that time. His physical findings during that admission were unremarkable. In [REDACTED] he had some pain in the right shoulder but

no loss of function. Public Law 104-121 is cited due to the materiality of drug and alcohol abuse. The medical evidence of record does not document a mental/physical impairment(s) that significant limits the claimant's ability to perform basic work activities. Therefore, MA-P is denied per 20 CFR 416.921(a). Retroactive MA-P was considered in this case and is also denied. SDA is denied per PEM 261 due to lack of severity.

(9) Claimant is a 45-year-old man whose birth date is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5' 8" tall and weighs 242 pounds. Claimant attended the 11<sup>th</sup> grade and has no GED. Claimant is able to read the Bible but can't read and write well and stated that he cannot count money.

(10) Claimant stated that he last worked 6 years ago at a restaurant where he washed dishes. Claimant has also painted houses and was incarcerated from [REDACTED].

(11) Claimant alleges as disabling impairments: auditory and visual hallucinations, bipolar disorder, substance abuse, a bad back, illiteracy, right leg numbness, arthritis in his back, shortness of breath, sleep apnea, an injured tailbone and shoulder, as well as schizophrenia and suicidal tendencies.

### 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 for approximately 6 years. Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

The objective medical evidence on the record indicates that on [REDACTED], claimant was admitted to the hospital for auditory and visual hallucinations. The diagnosis at the time of admission was medication overdose for which he received charcoal with sorbitol in the ambulance. A detailed workup in the emergency department showed his TSA level—tylenol, salicylate, and alcohol were all negative. At the time of discharge he was seen calmly lying down in bed, alert and oriented x3, and in no apparent distress. Vital signs showed a pulse of 82, blood pressure 116/58, respirations 18, temperature 97, and saturation 96% on room air. Cardiovascular S1 and S2 were regular rate and rhythm. No murmurs audible. Respiratorally, the lungs were clear to auscultation bilaterally without wheezes or rales. The abdomen was soft, non-tender, and non-distended. Bowel sounds were present. Extremities had no edema, cyanosis, or clubbing. The central nervous system was grossly non-focal. (p. 13) Laboratory studies were obtained of significance of benzodiazepine was positive, cocaine was positive, opiates were positive, ammonia level was 17, TCA was less than 20, salicylate was less than 4, tylenol less than 10, sodium 141, potassium 3.8, chloride 107, CO2 was 32, glucose 128, BUN of 10, creatinine 1.3, AST 69, ALT 80, total bilirubin 1.2, lipase 25, magnesium 2.6, phosphorous 1.8, WBC of 14.2,

RBC of 6.49, and hemoglobin of 15.8. Additional lab was noted on the chart including alcohol less than .02. CT of the head appeared negative for acute abnormality. (p. 11)

At Step 2, claimant has the burden of proof of establishing that he 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 insufficient objective clinical medical evidence in the record that claimant suffers a severely restrictive physical or mental impairment. Claimant did testify that he walks with a cane that is prescribed by his doctor. However, there is no indication in the file that claimant needs an assistive device to walk with. There are no corresponding clinical findings that support the reports of symptoms and limitations made by the claimant.

Claimant testified on the record that he can stand for 6-7 minutes, sit for 15 minutes, walk 20-30 feet, and cannot squat or bend at the waist much. Claimant testified that his right shoulder hurts and that he is able to shower and dress himself, but not tie his shoes or touch his toes. Claimant testified that his level of pain on a scale from 1 to 10 without medication is a 10 and with medication is a 6/7. Claimant testified that he is right-handed and his right pinky hurts and his right leg is numb. Claimant testified that the heaviest weight he can carry is 10 pounds and that he stopped using drugs 2-3 years before the hearing. Claimant's testimony is not consistent with the lab results which indicate that he was positive for cocaine, alcohol, and opiates. There are no laboratory or x-ray findings in the file to indicate that claimant has any physical impairments or physical restrictions. There is no clinical impression that claimant is deteriorating. There is no medical finding that claimant has any muscle atrophy or trauma, abnormality or injury that is consistent with a deteriorating condition. In short, the claimant has restricted himself from tasks associated with occupational functioning based upon his reports of pain (symptoms) rather than medical findings. 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 that claimant has a severely restrictive physical impairment.

There is insufficient objective medical/psychiatric evidence in the record indicating claimant suffers mental limitations resulting from his reportedly depressed, bipolar, or schizophrenic state. There is no mental residual functional capacity assessment in the record. The evidentiary record is insufficient to find that claimant suffers a severely restrictive mental impairment. Claimant was oriented to time, person, and place and was basically stable once the drugs wore off in his system while he was in the hospital. For these reasons, this Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant has failed to meet his burden of proof at Step 2.

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).

There is insufficient objective medical 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. In addition, based upon claimant's medical report it is documented that he had heavy use of alcohol as well as cocaine and other opiates, which would have contributed to his physical and any alleged mental problems. Claimant was oriented to time, person, and place during the hearing. Claimant was able to answer all the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. Claimant must be denied benefits at Step 2 based upon his 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 he 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 him again at Step 4 based upon his ability to perform his past relevant work. Claimant's past relevant work was medium or light. As a dishwasher does not require strenuous physical exertion, there is insufficient objective medical evidence upon which this Administrative Law Judge could base a finding that claimant is unable to perform work which he has engaged in, in the past. Therefore, if claimant had not already been denied at Step 2, he would again be denied 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 his 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).

Claimant has submitted insufficient objective medical evidence that he lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his prior employment or that he is physically unable to do light or sedentary tasks if demanded of him. Claimant's activities of daily living do not appear to be very limited and he should be able to perform light or sedentary work even with his impairments. The claimant's testimony as to his limitations indicates that he should be able to perform light or sedentary work.

Claimant testified that he lives with a friend and that he is single and has no children under 18. Claimant testified that he doesn't have a driver's license and his friend takes him to the store. Claimant testified that he microwaves his food and that he grocery shops with help from his friend and uses the Amigo cart. Claimant testified that he plays cards as a hobby and that he no longer smokes or drinks. The claimant's testimony as to his limitations indicates that he should be able to perform light or sedentary work.

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 contained in the file indicate that claimant has a history of tobacco and alcohol abuse. Claimant also has a history of drug abuse in the form of opiates and cocaine. 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 the claimant does not meet the statutory disability definition under the authority of the DA&A Legislation because his substance abuse is material to his 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 he does receive some relief from his pain medication. Claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 5 based upon the fact that he has not established by objective medical evidence that he cannot perform light or sedentary work even with his 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, p. 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 his impairments. The department has established its case by a preponderance of the evidence.

Accordingly, the department's decision is AFFIRMED.

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

Date Signed: March 17, 2010

Date Mailed: March 17, 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

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