

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: 2010-26850
Issue No: 2009/4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
April 20, 2010
Berien 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 April 20, 2010. Claimant and his wife 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 married, 55-year-old high school graduate with a skilled/semi-skilled work history in CAD/CAM engineering and long distance trucking.
- (2) Claimant's work stop date is unclear because the document he completed at application indicates he stopped trucking in November 2008, but he testified he has not done his

routine [REDACTED] run, or any other run since August 2008 (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 4 and 64).

(3) On January 25, 2010, claimant filed a disability-based application for Medical Assistance (MA) and a monthly cash grant (SDA).

(4) When the department denied claimant's application, he filed a hearing request; the hearing was held by conference telephone on April 20, 2010.

(5) Claimant stands 6'2" tall and is morbidly obese at 315 pounds (BMI=40.4); weight loss and exercise have been medically recommended (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 31 and 67-68).

(6) Claimant has been diagnosed with high blood pressure and high cholesterol not uncommon in medically obese patients and currently under adequate control with prescription medications.

(7) Claimant has never been involved in any mental health treatment or counseling and no severe mental, emotional, cognitive or mood deficits are evidenced by the medical records submitted to date; however, claimant's treating doctor has prescribed the generic form of Prozac in response to claimant's self-reported depressive symptoms.

(8) Claimant has been diagnosed with fibromyalgia and reports pain in the common trigger point areas.

(9) Claimant's treating doctor has prescribed [REDACTED] (a serotonin and norepinephrine re-uptake inhibitor) and [REDACTED] (a muscle relaxant) for pain management (Department Exhibit #1, pg 68).

(10) Claimant's past medical history is positive for benign polyp removal and treatment of positive Helicobacter pylori virus in 2008 (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 48 and 49).

(11) Claimant continues to take over-the-counter Prilosec daily for gastric upset, but nothing on this record suggests a recurrence of Helicobacter pylori virus.

(12) On December 12, 2008, claimant underwent resting and exercise electrocardiogram testing.

(13) The resting portion of claimant's test showed some nonspecific ST changes, but normal sinus rhythm and stable heart rate (82 per minute)(Department Exhibit #1, pg 57).

(14) The exercise portion of claimant's test (treadmill) revealed moderate exercise tolerance (6 minutes/7 METS), but testing was stopped at that time due to shortness of breath and exhaustion (Department Exhibit #1, pg 57).

(15) On December 24, 2008, claimant underwent lower extremity arterial studies which were normal, without evidence of stenosis or ischemia (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 37).

(16) On January 2, 2009, claimant underwent cardiac catheterization in response to recurrent chest pain symptoms (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 32-34).

(17) Claimant's ejection fraction was 50% (the lower limit of normal) secondary to mild/moderate blockages in claimant's left circumflex and right coronary arteries, thus leading to a diagnosis of nonobstructive coronary artery disease for which claimant now takes a low dose aspirin (81 mg) daily (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 4 and 33).

(18) In August 2009, claimant's long-term treating doctor completed a Medical Examination Report (DHS-49) which assesses claimant with the capacity to perform limited, light exertional work activities in concurrence with a September 2009 Social Security vocational expert's assessment finding no medical factors to prevent claimant from doing light work (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 15-16 and 28).

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 since he stopped long distance trucking in 2008 (See Finding of Fact #2 above).

At Step 2, claimant's diagnosed fibromyalgia has left him with documented pain and general fatigue. However, it must be noted no severe cardiac or mental impairments have been shown. 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. This Administrative Law Judge finds claimant's fibromyalgia symptoms appear capable of adequate pain management with his current prescription medications, as long as medication compliance is maintained. Additionally, claimant's symptoms could reasonably be expected to diminish even further if he would adhere to the repeated medical recommendations to lose weight and engage in regular exercise. Nevertheless, claimant's medically managed physical impairment meets 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 are severe enough to meet or equal any specifically listed impairments; consequently, the analysis must continue.

At Step 4, claimant reported he cannot pass the mandatory physical necessary to maintain his long distance trucking career. That may be so. However, nothing on this record supports claimant's contention he is mentally or physically incapable of performing his past CAD/CAM engineering duties on a sustained basis, despite his wife's personal opinion to the contrary at hearing. As such, this analysis could end at Step 4, based on a finding claimant retains the residual functional capacity to return to his past relevant work. However, even if an analysis of the very last step in the required sequential evaluation process was necessary, claimant would be unsuccessful in establishing a legally disabling condition.

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 55-year-old individual with specific training beyond the high school level and a history of skilled/semi-skilled work with potential for transferability into the competitive workforce. Consequently, at Step 5, this Administrative Law Judge finds, from the medical evidence of record, that claimant retains the residual functional capacity to perform unskilled, light work as that term is defined above, in concurrence with the Social Security vocational expert's and the department's State Hearing Review Team's (SHRT's) decision. As such, claimant is not disabled under the governing MA/SDA rules, because he can return to other unskilled light work, as directed by Medical-Vocational Rule 202.05.

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 19, 2010

Date Mailed: May 20, 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.

MBM/db

cc:

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