

**STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2010-41952
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: August 12, 2010
DHS County: Genesee (25-02)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Carmen G. Fahie

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 Thursday, August 12, 2010. Claimant personally appeared and testified on his own behalf with his authorized representative, [REDACTED] and his mother, [REDACTED], and friend, [REDACTED], as witnesses.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (Department) properly deny the Claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P) and Retroactive Medical Assistance?

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 February 24, 2010, the Claimant applied for MA-P with Retroactive MA-P to January 2010.
2. On March 22, 2010, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied the Claimant's application for MA-P and Retroactive MA-P stating that the Claimant's impairments lack duration of 12 months per 20 CFR 416.
3. On April 1, 2010, the Department caseworker sent the Claimant a notice that his application was denied.
4. On June 25, 2010, the Department received a hearing request from the Claimant, contesting the Department's negative action.
5. On July 14, 2010, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) considered the submitted objective medical evidence in making its determination of MA-P and Retroactive MA-P for the Claimant. The Claimant is 34 years old with less than a

high school education and a history of unskilled work. He alleges disability due to a gunshot wound, fracture of left arm, and spinal cord injury. Additional information of a physical exam in narrative format was required to determine eligibility for benefits.

6. During the hearing on August 12, 2010, the Claimant requested permission to submit additional medical information that needed to be reviewed by SHRT. Additional medical information was received from the local Department office and forwarded to SHRT for review on three subsequent occasions with a SHRT decision of insufficient evidence on August 13, 2010.
7. On August 17, 2010, the SHRT considered the newly submitted objective medical evidence in making its determination of MA-P and Retroactive MA-P. The Claimant's impairments do not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security listing. The Claimant's impairments lack duration per CFR 416.909 where he is capable of performing work that is sedentary per 20 CFR 416.967 (a) and unskilled work per 20 CFR 416.968 (a) under Vocational Rule 201.23.
8. The Claimant is a 36 year-old man whose date of birth is [REDACTED]. The claimant is 5' 11" tall and weighs 205 pounds. The Claimant has a less than high school education and completed the 10th grade of high school. The Claimant can read and write and do basic math, but was special education for reading and math. The Claimant was last employed as a cook/dishwasher in 2005 at the medium level. The Claimant has also been employed as a crew person/set up person and laborer at the heavy level.
9. The Claimant's alleged impairments are a gunshot wound in [REDACTED], fracture of left arm, and spinal cord injury from a fall in [REDACTED].

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

MA-P is established by the Title XIX of the Social Security Act and is implemented by Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers MA-P pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MCL 400.105. Department policies are found in the BAM, BEM and PRM.

"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.

... We follow a set order to determine whether you are disabled. We review any current work activity, the severity of your impairment(s), your residual functional capacity, your past work, and your age, education and work experience. If

we can find that you are disabled or not disabled at any point in the review, we do not review your claim further.... 20 CFR 416.920.

... If you are working and the work you are doing is substantial gainful activity, we will find that you are not disabled regardless of your medical condition or your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(b).

... [The impairment] ... must have lasted or must be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. We call this the duration requirement. 20 CFR 416.909.

... If you do not have any impairment or combination of impairments which significantly limits your physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, we will find that you do not have a severe impairment and are, therefore, not disabled.

We will not consider your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(c).

[In reviewing your impairment] ... we need reports about your impairments from acceptable medical sources.... 20 CFR 416.913(a).

... Statements about your pain or other symptoms will not alone establish that you are disabled; there must be medical signs and laboratory findings which show that you have a medical impairment.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

... You must provide medical evidence showing that you have an impairment(s) and how severe it is during the time you say that you are disabled. 20 CFR 416.912(c).

... [The record must show a severe impairment] which significantly limits your physical or mental ability to do basic work activities.... 20 CFR 416.920(c).

... 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).

... The medical evidence ... must be complete and detailed enough to allow us to make a determination about whether you are disabled or blind. 20 CFR 416.913(d).

Medical findings consist of symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings:

- (a) **Symptoms** are your own description of your physical or mental impairment. Your statements alone are not enough to establish that there is a physical or mental impairment.
- (b) **Signs** are anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which can be observed, apart from your statements (symptoms). Signs must be shown by medically acceptable clinical diagnostic techniques. Psychiatric signs are medically demonstrable phenomena which indicate specific psychological abnormalities e.g., abnormalities of behavior, mood, thought, memory, orientation, development, or perception. They must also be shown by observable facts that can be medically described and evaluated.
- (c) **Laboratory findings** are anatomical, physiological, or psychological phenomena which can be shown by the use of medically acceptable laboratory diagnostic techniques. Some of these diagnostic techniques include chemical tests, electrophysiological studies (electrocardiogram, electroencephalogram, etc.), roentgenological studies (X-rays), and psychological tests. 20 CFR 416.928.

It must allow us to determine --

- (1) The nature and limiting effects of your impairment(s) for any period in question;
- (2) The probable duration of your impairment; and
- (3) Your residual functional capacity to do work-related physical and mental activities. 20 CFR 416.913(d).

Information from other sources may also help us to understand how your impairment(s) affects your ability to work. 20 CFR 416.913(e).

... You can only be found disabled if you are unable 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. See 20 CFR 416.905. Your impairment must result from anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which are demonstrable by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques.... 20 CFR 416.927(a)(1).

... Evidence that you submit or that we obtain 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 your impairment(s), including your symptoms, diagnosis and prognosis, what you can still do despite impairment(s), and your physical or mental restrictions. 20 CFR 416.927(a)(2).

... In deciding whether you are disabled, we will always consider the medical opinions in your case record together with the rest of the relevant evidence we receive. 20 CFR 416.927(b).

After we review all of the evidence relevant to your claim, including medical opinions, we make findings about what the evidence shows. 20 CFR 416.927(c).

... If all of the evidence we receive, including all medical opinion(s), is consistent, and there is sufficient evidence for us to decide whether you are disabled, we will make our determination or decision based on that evidence. 20 CFR 416.927(c)(1).

... If any of the evidence in your case record, including any medical opinion(s), is inconsistent with other evidence or is internally inconsistent, we will weigh all of the evidence and see whether we can decide whether you are disabled based on the evidence we have. 20 CFR 416.927(c)(2).

[As Judge] ... we are responsible for making the determination or decision about whether you meet the statutory definition of disability. In so doing, we review all of the medical findings and other evidence that support a medical source's statement that you are disabled.... 20 CFR 416.927(e).

... A statement by a medical source that you are "disabled" or "unable to work" does not mean that we will determine that you are disabled. 20 CFR 416.927(e).

... If you have an impairment(s) which meets the duration requirement and is listed in Appendix 1 or is equal to a listed impairment(s), we will find you disabled without considering your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(d).

... If we cannot make a decision on your current work activities or medical facts alone and you have a severe impairment, we will then review your residual functional capacity and the physical and mental demands of the work you have done in the past. If you can still do this kind of work, we will find that you are not disabled. 20 CFR 416.920(e).

If you cannot do any work you have done in the past because you have a severe impairment(s), we will consider your residual functional capacity and your age, education, and past work experience to see if you can do other work. If you cannot, we will find you disabled. 20 CFR 416.920(f)(1).

... Your residual functional capacity is what you can still do despite limitations. If you have more than one impairment, we will consider all of your impairment(s) of which we are aware. We will consider your ability to meet certain demands of jobs, such as physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements, and other functions, as described in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) of this section. Residual functional capacity is an assessment based on all of the relevant evidence.... 20 CFR 416.945(a).

... This assessment of your remaining capacity for work is not a decision on whether you are disabled, but is used as the basis for determining the particular types of work you may be able to do despite your impairment(s).... 20 CFR 416.945(a).

... In determining whether you are disabled, we will consider all of your symptoms, including pain, and the extent to which your symptoms can reasonably be accepted as consistent with objective medical evidence, and other evidence.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

... In evaluating the intensity and persistence of your symptoms, including pain, we will consider all of the

available evidence, including your medical history, the medical signs and laboratory findings and statements about how your symptoms affect you... We will then determine the extent to which your alleged functional limitations or restrictions due to pain or other symptoms can reasonably be accepted as consistent with the medical signs and laboratory findings and other evidence to decide how your symptoms affect your ability to work.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

If you have more than one impairment, we will consider all of your impairments of which we are aware. We will consider your ability to meet certain demands of jobs, such as physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements, and other functions as described in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) of this section. Residual functional capacity is an assessment based upon all of the relevant evidence. This assessment of your capacity for work is not a decision on whether you are disabled but is used as a basis for determining the particular types of work you may be able to do despite your impairment. 20 CFR 416.945.

... When we assess your physical abilities, we first assess the nature and extent of your physical limitations and then determine your residual functional capacity for work activity on a regular and continuing basis. A limited ability to perform certain physical demands of work activity, such as sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, or other physical functions (including manipulative or postural functions, such as reaching, handling, stooping or crouching), may reduce your ability to do past work and other work. 20 CFR 416.945(b).

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 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). At Step 1, the Claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity and has not worked since 2005. Therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

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 means, 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.

The objective medical evidence on the record further substantiates the Administrative Law Judge findings. The Claimant had back surgery in [REDACTED], then additional surgery in [REDACTED] for his back. Department Exhibits 5-6 and 2-4. The Claimant was shot in [REDACTED] that fractured his arm. Department Exhibits C-D. On [REDACTED], the Claimant still had limitation with regard to strenuous activity, heavy lifting, and driving. He was able to discontinue his cervical collar. Department Exhibits X-U.

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence in the record indicates that the Claimant has established that he has a severe impairment. The Claimant had multiple operations as a result of his gunshot wound as well as back surgeries. He continued to be impaired

up to [REDACTED] even though his last surgery was [REDACTED]. Therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 2. However, this Administrative Law Judge will proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine disability because Step 2 is a *de minimus* standard.

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 the 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, the Claimant cannot be found to be disabled based upon medical evidence alone. 20 CFR 416.920(d). This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant's impairments do not rise to the level necessary to be listed as disabling by law. Therefore, the Claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 3.

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 the claimant from doing past relevant work. 20 CFR 416.920(e). It is the finding of this Administrative Law Judge, based upon the medical evidence and objective, physical and psychological findings that the Claimant is not able to maintain his daily living activities. The Claimant does feel that his condition has worsened because of balance issues where he has bowel and urine inconsistency combined with muscle and nerve issues. The Claimant stated that he has mental impairments of depression where he is not taking medication and not in therapy. The Claimant does not smoke where before he smoked ½ a pack per day of cigarettes in September or August 2009. The Claimant has not drunk alcohol since August 2009 and he previously drank a couple of beers 2 to 4 times a week. The Claimant has not used illegal or illicit drugs since August 2009 and previously he smoked marijuana. The Claimant did not feel there was any work he could do.

At Step 4, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant has established that he cannot perform any of his prior work. The Claimant was previously employed as a cook/dishwasher in 2005 at the medium level. The Claimant has also been employed as a crew person/set-up person and laborer at the heavy level. His past employment was at the medium to heavy level which he would have a difficult time performing with his physical limitations. The Claimant has physical limitations that would limit his ability to perform his past employments. Therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 4. However, the Administrative Law Judge will still proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine whether or not the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his prior jobs.

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 the 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.

... To determine the physical exertion requirements of work in the national economy, we classify jobs as sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very 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).

The objective medical evidence on the record is sufficient that the Claimant lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his previous employment or that he is physically unable to do any tasks demanded of him. The Claimant’s testimony as to his limitations indicates his limitations are exertional and non-exertional.

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).

In the instant case, the Claimant testified that he had depression but is not taking medications or in therapy. See MA analysis step 2. The medical evidence on the record is insufficient to support a mental impairment that is so severe as to prevent the Claimant from performing any work.

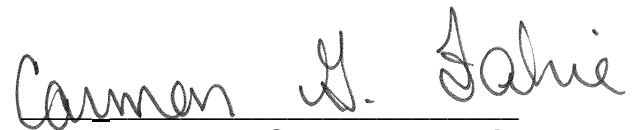
At Step 5, the claimant cannot meet the physical requirements of sedentary work, based upon the Claimant’s physical abilities. Under the Medical-Vocational guidelines, a younger aged individual with a limited or less high school education and an unskilled

work history who is limited to sedentary work is considered disabled. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Rule 201.18. The Medical-Vocational guidelines are not strictly applied with non-exertional impairments such as depression. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Section 200.00. Using the Medical-Vocational guidelines as a framework for making this decision and after giving full consideration to the Claimant's physical and mental impairments, the Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant cannot perform sedentary work and that the Claimant does meet the definition of disabled under the MA program.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the Department has not appropriately established that it was acting in compliance with Department policy when it denied the Claimant's application for MA-P and Retroactive MA-P. The Claimant is not capable of performing sedentary work. The Department has not established its case by a preponderance of the evidence.

Accordingly, the Department's decision is **REVERSED**. The Claimant is eligible for MA-P retroactive to January 2010 with a medical review required in January 2013. The Department is ordered to initiate a determination of eligibility based on the Claimant's February 24, 2010 application.



Carmen G. Fahie
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: January 11, 2012

Date Mailed: January 17, 2012

NOTICE: Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS) 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. MAHS 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. (60 days for FAP cases)

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.

Claimant may request a rehearing or reconsideration for the following reasons:

- A rehearing **MAY** be granted if there is newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome of the original hearing decision.
- A reconsideration **MAY** be granted for any of the following reasons:

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- misapplication of manual policy or law in the hearing decision,
- typographical errors, mathematical error, or other obvious errors in the hearing decision that effect the substantial rights of the claimant:
- the failure of the ALJ to address other relevant issues in the hearing decision.

Request must be submitted through the local DHS office or directly to MAHS by mail at
Michigan Administrative Hearings
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P. O. Box 30639
Lansing, Michigan 48909-07322

CGF/pf

cc:

