

STATE OF MICHIGAN
STATE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS AND RULES
ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER:

[REDACTED]

Reg No. 201048109
Issue No. 2009
Case No. [REDACTED]
Load No. [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: September 21, 2010
Clinton 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 the claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, an in-person hearing was held on September 21, 2010. Claimant and her husband personally appeared and testified. She was assisted by [REDACTED]

ISSUE

Did the department properly determine claimant is not disabled by Medicaid (MA)/retro-MA eligibility standards?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds a material fact:

1. Claimant is a married, 48-year-old former tobacco abuser (20+ years/now intermittent) who has a Registered Nurse (RN) degree, but she has not worked at all since October 2009 after failing a return-to-work attempt following her July 2009 heart attack.
2. On March 11, 2010, claimant's authorized representative filed an MA/retro-MA application on her behalf.

3. When that application was denied, claimant's authorized representative filed a hearing request, held in the local department office on September 21, 2010.
4. Claimant stands 5'6" tall and is medically obese at 298 pounds (BMI=48.1).
5. Claimant has never been psychiatrically hospitalized nor has she ever been involved in any outpatient mental health treatment; consequently, her disability claim is based solely on her combined physical impairments, which include Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and fibromyalgia (Department Exhibit #1, pgs 83-89).
6. Claimant was diagnosed with fibromyalgia several years ago but she continued to work until 2009, when her pervasive pain symptoms increased contemporaneous with her generally failing health after her July 2009 heart attack.
7. Claimant's COPD was first diagnosed in July 2009 via a pulmonary function test (PFT) while she was hospitalized for her heart attack, and also, because she had a pulmonary embolism at that time which needed treatment (Department Exhibit #1, pg 83).
8. Claimant's February 2010 updated PFT test results were more consistent with a restrictive pattern than the one done in the hospital in July 2009 (Department Exhibit #1, pg 83).
9. Specifically, claimant's best, post-bronchodilator scores were as follows: 1) FVC 2.57; 2) FEV 1 1.85, which do not meet the restrictive levels necessary to qualify as an automatic disability under the applicable Listings (3.02/3.03)(Department Exhibit #1, pg 82).
10. In September 2010, claimant was readmitted to the hospital for 11 days (9/4/10-9/15/10), secondary to continued, severe COPD exacerbations (Client Exhibit A, pgs 1-8).
11. Claimant's September 2010 hospital records provide the following historical assessment of her medical condition since February 2010:

...She has a history of asthma, pulmonary embolus, coronary artery disease, hypertension and laryngeal spasm. She began having problems with increased cough and increased sinus congestion in spite of using her home inhalers and nebulizers. She could [not] walk without being short of breath. She had been taken off ██████████ in February [2010] because of retroperitoneal hematoma... [Client Exhibit A, pg 1].

12. While hospitalized, claimant developed elevated blood sugar levels secondary to steroids administered via PICC line for treatment of her COPD exacerbation (Client Exhibit A, pgs 1 and 2).
13. The doctors started claimant on ██████████; however, her diabetes resolved as of discharge and claimant now uses only oral ██████████, with ██████████ on hand as a "back-up," if necessary (Client Exhibit A, pg 66).

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Medical Assistance (MA) program 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 of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the MA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MCL 400.105. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

Under the Medicaid (MA) program:

"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.

When determining disability, the federal regulations require several factors to be considered, including: (1) the location/duration/frequency/intensity of an applicant's pain; (2) the type/dosage/effectiveness/side effects of any medication the applicant takes to relieve pain; (3) any treatment other than pain medication that the applicant has received to relieve pain; and (4) the effect of the applicant's

pain on his or her ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3). The applicant's pain must be assessed to determine the extent of his or her functional limitations in light of the objective medical evidence presented. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(94).

...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).

...Pain or other symptoms may cause a limitation of function beyond that which can be determined on the basis of the anatomical, physiological or psychological abnormalities considered alone.... 20 CFR 416.945(e).

...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).

...Since symptoms sometimes suggest a greater severity of impairment than can be shown by objective medical evidence alone, we will carefully consider any other information you may submit about your symptoms.... 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3).

...Because symptoms such as pain, are subjective and difficult to quantify, any symptom-related functional limitations and restrictions which you, your treating or examining physician or psychologist, or other persons report, which can reasonably be accepted as consistent with the objective medical evidence and other evidence, will be taken into account...in reaching a conclusion as to whether you are disabled.... 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3).

...We will consider all of the evidence presented, including information about your prior work record, your statements about your symptoms, evidence submitted by your treating, examining or consulting physician or psychologist, and observations by our employees and other persons.... 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3).

...Your symptoms, including pain, will be determined to diminish your capacity for basic work activities...to the extent that your alleged functional limitations and restrictions due to symptoms, such as pain, can reasonably be accepted as consistent with the objective medical evidence and other evidence. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(4).

In claimant's case, the ongoing pain, shortness-of-breath and other non-exertional symptoms she describes are consistent with the objective medical evidence presented. Consequently, great weight and credibility must be given to her testimony in this regard.

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 has not been employed since October 2009; consequently, the analysis must move to Step 2.

In this case, claimant has presented the required medical data and evidence necessary to support a finding that claimant has significant physical limitations upon claimant's ability to perform basic work activities.

Medical evidence has clearly established that claimant has an impairment (or combination of impairments) that has more than a minimal effect on claimant's work activities. See Social Security Rulings 85-28, 88-13, and 82-63.

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 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, claimant cannot be found to be disabled based upon medical evidence alone. 20 CFR 416.920(d).

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 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 findings, that claimant cannot return to her past relevant work because the rigors of nursing/patient care are completely outside the scope of her physical abilities given the medical evidence presented.

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 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 you 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.

See *Felton v DSS* 161 Mich. App 690, 696 (1987). Once claimant reaches Step 5 in the sequential review process, claimant has already established a *prima facie* case of disability. *Richardson v Secretary of Health and Human Services*, 735 F2d 962 (6th Cir, 1984). At that point, the burden of proof is on the state to prove by substantial evidence that the claimant has the residual functional capacity for substantial gainful activity.

After careful review of claimant's extensive medical record and the Administrative Law Judge's personal interaction with claimant at the hearing, this Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant's exertional and non-exertional impairments render claimant unable to engage in a full range of even sedentary work activities on a regular and continuing basis. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P. Appendix 11, Section 201.00(h). See Social Security Ruling 83-10; *Wilson v Heckler*, 743 F2d 216 (1986). The department has failed to provide vocational evidence which establishes that claimant has the residual functional capacity for substantial gainful activity and that, given claimant's age, education, and work experience, there are significant numbers of jobs in the national economy which the claimant could perform despite claimant's limitations. Accordingly, this Administrative Law Judge concludes that claimant is disabled for purposes of the MA program. Consequently, the department's denial of her March 11, 2010 MA/retro-MA application cannot be upheld.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the department erred in determining claimant is not currently disabled for MA/retro-MA eligibility purposes.

Accordingly, the department's decision is REVERSED, and it is Ordered that:

1. The department shall process claimant's March 11, 2010 MA/retro-MA application, and shall award her all the benefits she may be entitled to receive, as long as she meets the remaining financial and non-financial eligibility factors.
2. The department shall review claimant's medical condition for improvement in October 2012, unless her Social Security Administration disability status is approved by that time.

