

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2010-49851

Issue No: 2009, 4031

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Montcalm County DHS

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Landis Y. Lain for Jana Bachman

**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 [REDACTED]. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

This hearing was originally held by Administrative Law Judge [REDACTED]. Judge [REDACTED] is no longer affiliated with the Michigan Administrative Hearing System Administrative Hearings for the Department of Human Services and this hearing decision was completed by Administrative Law Judge [REDACTED] by considering the entire record.

**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 May 10, 2010, claimant filed an application for Medical Assistance, State Disability Assistance and Retroactive Medical Assistance benefits alleging disability.
- (2) On June 9, 2010, the Medical Review Team denied claimant's application stating that claimant's impairment's lack duration.
- (3) On June 16, 2010, the department caseworker sent claimant notice that her application was denied.

- (4) On July 8, 2010, claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
- (5) On September 7, 2010, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating in its analysis and recommendation: the claimant has demonstrated significant improvement of isolated visual field effect associated with internal carotid artery stenosis. The claimant was evaluated for possible psychiatric condition and there is no evidence of severe limitations secondary to diagnosis. The claimant's physical condition does not demonstrate that duration requirements are met that would prevent gainful employment. There is no evidence to support any limitations to allege arthritis. The medical evidence of record indicates that the claimant's condition is improving whether expected to improve within 12 months from the date of onset or from the date of surgery. Therefore, MA-P is denied due to lack of duration under 20 CFR 416.909. Retroactive MA-P was considered in this case and is also denied. SDA is denied per PEM261 as the impairments were not preclude work activity for 90 days. Listings 1.02, 1.03, 1.04, 2.02, 4.04, 11.04, 11.14 were considered in this determination.
- (6) The hearing was held on September 30, 2010. At the hearing, claimant waived the time periods and requested to submit additional medical information.
- (7) On the date of hearing claimant is a [REDACTED] whose birth date is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5' 4" tall and weighs 162 pounds. Claimant completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
- (8) Claimant last worked October 2009 as a Customer Service Representative and Retail. Claimant also worked as a restaurant cook and in a factory as a Supervisor and as a bartender.
- (9) Claimant alleges as disabling impairments: stroke, poor vision, side effects of medication and anxiety.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The regulations governing the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are found in the Michigan Administrative Code, MAC R 400.901-400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because his or her claim for assistance has been denied. MAC R 400.903(1). Clients have the right to contest a department decision affecting eligibility or benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. The department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness of that decision. BAM 600.

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 Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 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 since 2009. Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

The subjective and objective medical evidence on the record indicates that claimant testified on the record that she lives with her son and her mother supports her, and she does have a driver's license but she doesn't drive. She is able to drive, however.

Claimant testified she does cook and grocery shop and do housekeeping duties but it takes longer and she doesn't do much in her typical day. Claimant testified she has poor vision and uncorrected vision in her left eye and she can't really read. She gets tired easily and her meds make her dizzy. Claimant testified that she has anxiety and panic attacks and her heart pounds and she gets dizzy. Claimant testified that she can walk 2 blocks and she gets tired. Claimant stated that she can stand for 30 minutes, sit for an hour at a time. Claimant testified the heaviest weight she can carry is 10 pounds and she is left handed. Claimant testified that she stopped smoking in 2010 and she usually drinks 6 beers bi-weekly. A psychological evaluation on August 28, 2010, indicates that claimant was in contact with reality and able to make and maintain good eye contact. When asked about her self-esteem she stated "it's not much". She stated she doesn't work and she's depressed about it and she thinks she's a good person. Her speech was clear, organized, logical and spontaneous. She was able to attend, focus and concentrate through the examination. She presented as a 54 year old white female who stand 5' 5 1/2" tall and weighs 170 pounds. She does not wear corrective lenses. She did show a valid Michigan driver's license. Her mother drove her to the appointment. No gait disturbance was noted. Her hygiene and grooming were adequate (Page 81). She denies past suicide attempts and present suicidal ideation. She was oriented time 4. She was able to recall 6 numbers forward and 4 numbers in reverse. She was able to recall 2 out of 3 objects after 3 minutes and the third object with one hint. She was able to name the current President of the United States. She was able to state her date of birth and able to name 2 of the 4 former Presidents who are still living. She was able to name 5 large cities. She was able to add, subtract and multiply.  $100 - 7 = 93$ , 84, 77, 70, 63, 56, 49, 42, 35, 28 and 21. She stated the grass is greener on this side of the fence means sometimes people think its greener in somebody else life and don't cry over spilled milk meant that if something happens don't cry about it. When asked how an orange and banana are alike she stated they are both fruits, and how they are different is that the shape is different. When asked what she would do if she was the first one to see smoke and fire inside a movie theater she stated she would yell out and tell somebody to call 911. When asked what she would do if she found a sealed stamped addressed envelope on the ground she said she would stick it in the mailbox. Her future plans were hopefully to get a job and get some money come in and she would like to take her grandchildren out and do more things with them like just taking them to the park (Page 82). She was diagnosed with adjustment disorder with mixed anxiety and depressed mood and a GAF of 55-60. Her progress was fair pending medical resolution and she would be able to handle her own benefit funds if she was able to understand, retain and follow simple instructions. There was no reason to restrict her from performing simple routine repetitive task within her physician's physical restrictions (Page 83). On March 18, 2010, provider report indicated claimant's blood pressure was 130/80 her pulse was 72 and her temperature was 98, respiration 16, she was alert appearing slightly overweight female in no acute distress. She was alert and oriented time 3. Head was normocephalic, atraumatic. Pupils were equal, round and reactive to light and accommodation. EOMI slight decrease visual field in her lower right eye. Ears: Tympanic Membranes were normal. External auditory canals were normal. And nose turbinates are boggy. Throat without erythema or exudates. Postnasal drip seen. Neck had no lymphadenopathy and full range of motion. The lungs were clear to auscultation

bilaterally. The heart had regular rate and rhythm normal S1, S2, no murmurs or gallops heard. The left radial pulse +2 and steady. Right radial pulse +1 and steady. Dorsalis pedis and posterior tibial pulses +2 and steady. The abdomen was obese, no masses or scars noted. Postive bowel sound in all four quadrants. No tenderness or light or deep palpation. No organomegaly noted. The musculoskeletal area there is full range of motion in both upper and lower extremities. No pain, redness or swelling of any joints. The neurological area cranial nerves 2-12 are grossly intact bilaterally. The motor had good muscle tone of both upper and lower extremities. Strength was 5/5 of lower extremities. Deep tendon reflexes +2/4 biceps, knee, and ankle. Babinski is normal (Page 15).

At Step 2, claimant has the burden of proof of establishing that she 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 has reports of pain in multiple areas of her body; however, there are no corresponding clinical findings that support the reports of symptoms and limitations made by the claimant. There are no laboratory or x-ray findings listed in the file. The clinical impression is that claimant is stable. 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, claimant has restricted herself from tasks associated with occupational functioning based upon her 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.

Claimant alleges the following disabling mental impairments: depression and anxiety

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/psychiatric evidence in the record indicating claimant suffers severe mental limitations. There is no mental residual functional capacity assessment in the record. There is insufficient 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. Claimant was oriented to time, person and place during the hearing. Claimant was able to answer all of the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. The evidentiary record is insufficient to find that claimant suffers a severely restrictive mental impairment. For these reasons, this Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant has failed to meet her burden of proof at Step 2. Claimant

must be denied benefits at this step based upon her 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 she 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 her again at Step 4 based upon her ability to perform her past relevant work. There is no evidence upon which this Administrative Law Judge could base a finding that claimant is unable to perform work in which she has engaged in, in the past. Therefore, if claimant had not already been denied at Step 2, he would be denied again 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 her 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 she lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in her prior



employment or that she is physically unable to do light or sedentary tasks if demanded of her. Claimant's activities of daily living do not appear to be very limited and she should be able to perform light or sedentary work even with her impairments. Claimant has failed to provide the necessary objective medical evidence to establish that she has a severe impairment or combination of impairments which prevent her from performing any level of work for a period of 12 months. The claimant's testimony as to her limitations indicates that she should be able to perform light or sedentary work.

There is insufficient objective medical/psychiatric 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. Claimant was able to answer all the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. Claimant was oriented to time, person and place during the hearing. 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. Therefore, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the objective medical evidence on the record does not establish that claimant has no residual functional capacity. Claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 5 based upon the fact that she has not established by objective medical evidence that she cannot perform light or sedentary work even with her impairments. Under the Medical-Vocational guidelines, a person who is approaching advanced age with a high school education and an unskilled work history who is limited to light work is not considered disabled. In addition, the medical evidence of record indicates that claimant's condition is improving and did improve within 12 months of the date of onset or from the date of surgery and therefore, claimant's impairments lack duration.

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 alcohol abuse. Applicable hearing is the Drug Abuse and Alcohol (DA&A) Legislation, Public Law 104-121, Section 105(b)(1), 110 STAT. 853, 42 USC 423(d)(2)(C), 1382(c)(a)(3)(J) Supplement Five 1999. 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 claimant does not meet the statutory disability definition under the authority of the DA&A Legislation because her substance abuse is material to her alleged impairment and alleged disability.

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

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. BEM, 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.

The Department has established by the necessary competent, material and substantial evidence on the record that it was acting in compliance with department policy when it determined that claimant was not eligible to receive Medical Assistance and/or State Disability Assistance.

### **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 her impairments. The department has established its case by a preponderance of the evidence.

Accordingly, the department's decision is AFFIRMED.

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Landis Y. Lain  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 5/23/11

Date Mailed: 5/23/11

**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/ds

■ [REDACTED]