

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No: 2010-51803
Issue No: 2009, 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: October 7, 2010
Saginaw County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Landis Y. Lain for Ivona Rairigh

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 October 7, 2010. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

This hearing was originally held by Administrative Law Judge Ivona Rairigh. Ivona Rairigh is no longer affiliated with the Michigan Administrative Hearing System Administrative Hearings for the Department of Human Services. This hearing decision was completed by Administrative Law Judge Landis Y. Lain 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 June 4, 2010, claimant filed an application for Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance benefits alleging disability.
- (2) On July 28, 2010, the Medical Review Team denied claimant's application stating that claimant's impairment's were non-exertional.
- (3) On July 30, 2010, the department case worker sent claimant notice that her application was denied.

- (4) On August 13, 2010, claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
- (5) On September 13, 2010, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating in its' analysis and recommended decision: the objective medical evidence present does not establish a disability at the listing or equivalence level. The collective medical evidence shows that the claimant is capable of performing a wide range of unskilled work. The claimant's impairment's do not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security listing. The medical evidence of record indicates that the claimant retains the capacity to perform a wide range of unskilled work. Therefore, based on the claimant's vocational profile of a closely approaching advanced age, 13 years of education and a semi-skilled work history, MA-P is denied using Vocational Rule 203.23 as a guide. Retroactive MA-P was considered in this case and is also denied. SDA is denied per PEM 261 because the nature and severity of the claimant's impairment's would not preclude work activity at the above stated level for 90 days.
- (6) On the date of hearing claimant was a 50-year-old woman whose birth date is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5'4" tall and weighed 183 pounds. Claimant had 1 ½ years of college and studied [REDACTED]. Claimant is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
- (7) Claimant last worked in December 2005 in the hospital nutrition department. Claimant has also worked as a nutrition coordinator.
- (8) Claimant alleges as disabling impairments: Osteogenesis imperfecta, major depression and bi-polar disorder.

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 approximately 2005. Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

The objective medical evidence on the record indicates that claimant had a certificate in phlebotomy, a state certified in safety and sanitation certificate. A [REDACTED] medical examination report indicates that claimant's HEENT: head atraumatic and normocephalic. Pupils are round and reactive to light in accommodation. The neck is supple with no JVD and adenopathy. The heart rate and rhythm have a 2/6 systolic murmur. Lungs were clear to auscultation, no wheezes, rales and rhonchi. The abdomen was non-tender, non-distended, positive bowel sounds. The musculoskeletal

area, there was diffused tenderness with palpation of the spinous process of thoracic and lumbar area. However, there is no significant palpation pain with the spinous process itself. Cranial nerves II-XII are grossly intact. Currently the claimant had a chronic T6 compression deformity as seen on the MRI as compared to the CT of the thoracic and lumbar spine. The claimant had a recent whole body bone image scan done February 16, 2010, which demonstrated no significant uptake at any level throughout the thoracic and lumbar spine (pp. 43-44).

A [REDACTED] medical examination indicates that claimant was 55" tall and weighed 186.3 pounds. Her blood pressure was 120/80, her pulse was 76, respiration 18, pulse oximetry 99. The Jamar dynameter right and left both measure 50. Her gait pattern was satisfactory. She ambulated without a limp. No appliances were seen. She got on and off the table without discomfort. Tandem gait was satisfactory. Flexion of the cervical spine was 40, extension was 20. Right and left lateral flexion is 30. Rotation right and left is 50. Lumbar spine flexion is 70; extension is 10. Side bending is 15 right and left. Supine exam, straight leg raising is 60. Fabere's patrick's is negative. Extensor strength is satisfactory. She has full motion of the shoulder and hips. Her knees are normal. Orthopedic supplemental report, she was able to stand and bend. She had difficulty stooping and carrying. She can push, pull, button clothes, tie her gown, dress and undress, dial a telephone, open a door, make a fist, pick up a coin, pick up a pencil and write. She had difficulty squatting and arising. She was able to get on and off the examining table. She had difficulty climbing stairs. Finger to finger was satisfactory. Finger to nose was satisfactory. Heel to shin causes pain. The HEENT: pupils react equally to light in accommodation. Sclera were normal in color. Fundoscopic exam did not reveal any lesions. Cranial nerves were intact. Tongue was in the midline. No thyroid masses. In the chest, lungs were clear to auscultation and percussion. Heart rate is 82 and regular. No murmurs. Abdomen is soft. Bowel sounds are present. There is no organomegaly. Reflexes were +1 and +2 and symmetrical. There was no deformity of bones noted in the musculo skeletal area. The diagnosis was osteogenesis imperfecta and history of depression bi-polar (pp. 157-158).

A psychiatric evaluation dated [REDACTED], indicates that claimant was in contact with reality and she stated that she hated herself. Her thoughts were spontaneous and well organized. There was no problems or patterns or content of speech. She denied the presence of any auditory or visual hallucinations, delusions, obsessions, persecutions or unusual powers. She reported an overwhelming feeling of worthlessness and occasional thoughts of suicide. There were no fluctuations in her weight over the past year. She reported sleep patterns that are excessive causing her to sleep 14-18 hours per day. Her emotional reaction appeared depressed throughout the evaluation. She was oriented x3. She correctly stated the year was 2009 and her current address. She was able to recall 5 digits forward and 4 digits backward. She was able to recall 2 out of 3 objects after a 3 minute interval. She named the current president as Barack Obama and the previous presidents Bush and Clinton. She correctly stated her birth date as [REDACTED]. When asked to name 5 large cities she named New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit and Cincinnati. She named

current famous people as Tiger Woods and George Clooney. When asked to identify current events, she identified more troops going to Afghanistan and Tiger Wood's accident. She was unable to perform serial 7's. On serial 3's she stated 100, 97, 94, 91, 88, 85 and 83. Performance on single digit calculation tasks were as follows: $9+8=17$, $12-7=5$ and $5*5=25$. She incorrectly calculated $8*7=42$ and $36/4=8$. When asked the meaning of the saying the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence she replied, "You might not think your life is very good but you realize it is good". When asked the meaning of the saying don't cry over spilled milk, she replied, "You do not need to be upset about stupid little things". When asked how a bush and a tree were alike, she replied, "They both have leaves". When asked how they were different, she replied, "One is shorter". When asked what she would do if she found a stamped addressed envelope lying on the sidewalk, she replied, "Send it in the mail". When asked what she would do if she discovered smoke or fire in a theatre, she responded, "Yell fire and tell everyone to get out" (pp. 165-166).

She was diagnosed with major depressive disorder recurrent severe without psychotic features and her GAF was 35 and her prognosis was poor but she could handle her own benefit funds (p. 167).

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 which support claimant's contention of disability. 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.

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, she 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 closely approaching advanced age, with a high school education and an unskilled work history who is limited to unskilled work is not considered disabled pursuant to Medical Vocational Rule 203.23.

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.

Landis

/s/

Y. Lain

Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: April 16, 2011

Date Mailed: April 17, 2011

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/alc

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