

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No: 201028098
Issue No: 2009; 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
April 20, 2010
Genesee County DHS (5)

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 April 20, 2010. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

This hearing was originally held by Administrative Law Judge Jana Bachman. Judge Bachman is no longer affiliated with the State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules Department of Human Services and this hearing decision was completed by Administrative Law Judge Landis Y. Lain by considering the record in its entirety.

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 January 22, 2010, claimant filed an application for State Disability Assistance benefits alleging disability. There was some confusion as to whether or not claimant also filed an application for Medical Assistance benefits, therefore, this Administrative Law Judge will address both issues.
- (2) On March 9, 2010, the Medical Review Team denied claimant's application.
- (3) On March 9, 2010, the department case worker sent claimant notice that his application was denied.

- (4) On March 24, 2010, claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
- (5) On April 2, 2010, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating that it had insufficient evidence and requested a complete physical examination and a psychiatric evaluation.
- (6) The hearing was held on April 20, 2010. At the hearing, claimant waived the time periods and requested to submit additional medical information.
- (7) Additional medical information was submitted and sent to the State Hearing Review Team on January 6, 2011.
- (8) On January 28, 2011, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating in its analysis and recommendation: the objective medical evidence supports the findings of the MRT that the claimant would retain the ability to perform gainful employment. It is reasonable that the claimant would be limited to performing tasks of medium exertional level of simple and repetitive tasks. 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 medium exertional and simple and repetitive work. Therefore, based on the claimant's vocational profile, of 42 years old, a high school equivalent education and a history of light unskilled employment, SDA is denied using Vocational Rule 203.28 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. MA-P and retroactive MA-P were not considered in this case as the claimant only applied for SDA. Listings 1.03 and 12.04 were considered in this determination.
- (9) On the date of hearing claimant was a 41-year-old man whose birth date is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5'8" tall and weighs 140 pounds. Claimant attended the 10th grade and has a GED. Claimant is able to read and write poorly and does not have basic math skills.
- (10) Claimant last worked in 2007 as a [REDACTED]. Claimant has also worked stocking in retail and doing factory work.
- (11) Claimant alleges as disabling impairments: arthritis, insomnia, anxiety, migraines and pain.

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 Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 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 2007. 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 he is homeless and he does not have a driver's license but he is able to drive. Claimant testified that he can walk a mile but gets tired, can stand from 1-2 hours and he cannot sit still but he does not have any other problems with sitting. Claimant testified that the heaviest weight that he can carry and he does smoke a 1/3 of a pack of cigarettes per day and drinking alcohol 2 months before the hearing but usually drank between 4 20 ounce beers on the weekends. Claimant testified that he does use other drugs. Claimant testified that he attempted suicide in 2008 and was admitted to a crisis center due to depression.

A [REDACTED] consultative examination dated [REDACTED] indicates that on physical examination, claimant had a temperature of 98.4 degrees, a pulse of 88 per minute, respiration 16 per minute, blood pressure 138/70, height 5'8" tall and weighed 151 pounds. His visual acuity without glasses was 20/40 in the left eye and 20/40 in the right eye. In general he was moderately built, right handed, wore no glasses and was depressed. The skin was warm and dry and he had no rashes or bruises seen. He had a stab wound injury below the light scapula on the back. There is a thoracotomy star in the right axilla in the middle and also in the left upper chest. In the lymph nodes, cervical, axillary and inguinal nodes are all within normal limits. HEENT: perla, EOMMI. There is icterus. There is ear wax but he is able to hear. The neck was supple without any JVD, carotid bruit or thyromegaly. The chest was normal contour without any deformity. Lungs were bilateral bronchovesicular breath sounds, no rales, rhonchi, or wheezes heard. The heart had normal S1 and S2, regular rate and rhythm. The abdomen was soft. There was tenderness in the right upper quadrant with hepatomegaly; however, there were no signs of any ascites or splenomegaly. In the neurological area there was no motor deficit, however, the claimant has some paresthesia of the fingertips as well as toes and feet. The vibrations sense was diminished; however, the position sense was intact. Deep tendon reflexes are reduced in both upper and lower extremities. The claimant was unable to do rapid alternating hand movements on both sides adequately and also heel to shin test. However, he was able to do finger to nose test. The Romberg sign is positive. In the spine, both cervical and thoracolumbosacral sign are normal with no limitation of movement. All joints in upper and lower extremities are normal except that he had some tenderness of the thumb and small fingers without any deformity. He was also having some pain on passive movements of both knee joints. However, there is no crepitus, effusion, inflammation or swelling. Extremities, there was no ankle or pedal edema. No signs of DVT. Peripheral pulses were diminished (pp. A1-A2).

Dexterity: fine and gross dexterity in both upper extremities and the grip in both hands was normal. Stance, posture and ambulation was normal. The claimant was unable to squat completely because of the knee joint pain. He was able to walk on heels and toes without any difficulty. He was able to get on and off the table without any difficulty. He was not using any ambulatory aide. The gait was normal. The impression was chronic alcoholism. Alcoholic hepatitis. History of liver failure secondary to Tylenol overdose at admission. History of stab injury on the back and admission to the hospital and pneumothorax, hemothorax, and collapsed lung. Chronic depression. Alcoholic neuropathy and possibly alcoholic amblyopia (p. A3).

A [REDACTED] psychological evaluation indicates that claimant was diagnosed with axis 1 recurrent episodes of major depression, anti-social personality with history of alcoholism and drug abuse and axis GAF of 47. It was stated that he should receive some assistance in managing any benefits assigned due to his history of alcoholism and drug abuse. He was court mandated into substance abuse treatment and catholic charities and AA for a year following his 2000 arrest for drinking and driving. He has had multiple treatments in the past as an alternative to incarceration. He is not currently involved in substance abuse treatment. He has a history of multiple arrests and during his evaluation in 2008 estimated that he may have been incarcerated for a total of 10 years on all charges (pp. 35-39).

An [REDACTED] consultative examination indicates that claimant had normal development, nutrition and body habitus. His HEENT was normal. His lungs were normal to auscultation and percussion. His heart was regular with no murmurs or gallop. Abdomen had no hepatosplenomegaly. The spine had no tenderness. Cardiovascular had no fullness and no tenderness. Extremities: pulses well felt with no edema. He was afebrile. No lymphadenopathy. In the neurological area he was oriented to time, place and person. Normal reflexes and sensation. Cranial nerves intact. The skin had a scar on the right lateral chest. The assessment is that his grip strength is weak, 4/5 in both hands. He does have some restriction of the left shoulder movement in the lumbar spine. He also had some restrictions in the neck movements. He had depression, anxiety and insomnia (p. 39).

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 his 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 himself from tasks associated with occupational functioning based upon his 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: substance abuse, 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 his burden of proof at Step 2. Claimant must be denied benefits at this step based upon his 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 he 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 him again at Step 4 based upon his ability to perform his 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 he 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 his 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 he lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his prior employment or that he is physically unable to do light or sedentary tasks if demanded of him. Claimant's activities of daily living do not appear to be very limited and he should be able to perform light or sedentary work even with his impairments. Claimant has failed to provide the necessary objective medical evidence to establish that he has a severe impairment or combination of impairments which prevent him from performing any level of work for a period of 12 months. The claimant's testimony as to his limitations indicates that he 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 he has not established by objective medical evidence that he cannot perform light or sedentary work even with his impairments. Under the Medical-Vocational guidelines, a younger individual (age 42), with a high school equivalent education and an unskilled work history who is limited to light work is not considered disabled.

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 indicate that claimant has a history of tobacco, drug, and 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 his substance abuse is material to his alleged impairment and alleged disability.

It should be noted that claimant continues to smoke despite the fact that his doctor has told him to quit. Claimant is not in compliance with his treatment program.

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 his 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: May 2, 2011

Date Mailed: May 3, 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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