

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg No. 201040282
Issue No. 2009; 4031
Case No. [REDACTED]
Load No. [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: July 28, 2010
Berrien County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Carmen G. Fahie

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon the claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on Wednesday, July 28, 2010. The claimant personally appeared and testified on his own behalf.

ISSUES

Did the department properly deny the claimant's new application for State Disability Assistance (SDA)?

Did the department properly determine that the claimant has not established continued eligibility for disability under the Medical Assistance (MA-P) program?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. On November 1, 2007, the claimant applied for MA-P and SDA with retroactive MA-P to August 2007.
2. On April 25, 2008, the Medical Review Team (MRT) approved the claimant's application for MA-P and SDA, and retroactive MA-P to August 2007 with a medical review required April 2009.
3. On January 8, 2010, the claimant's SDA was cancelled because of excess income through unemployment which ran out in February 2010.

- 4 On March 25, 2010, the claimant filed a new application for SDA and a medical review of MA-P.
- 5 On June 3, 2010, the MRT denied the claimant's application for MA-P cessation of benefits due to a Social Security Administration Administrative Law Judge's decision stating that the claimant is now capable of performing light work and SDA that the claimant's physical and mental impairment does not prevent employment for 90 days or more.
- 6 On June 11, 2010, the department caseworker sent the claimant a notice that his application was denied.
7. On June 21, 2010, the department received a hearing request from the claimant, contesting the department's negative action.
8. On July 7, 2010, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) considered the submitted objective medical evidence in making its determination of MA-P, retroactive MA-P, and SDA eligibility for the claimant. The SHRT report reads in part:

The claimant is 59 years old with a high school education and a history of medium, skilled employment.

There is a Social Security Administration Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) order, dated February 25, 2010, that the claimant only had a medically determinable impairment of hypertension from September 27, 2007 to date and was last insured on March 31, 2009. Further, that this condition was of a non-severe nature. The current evidence offered during the review process for continuing benefits demonstrates only a definitive diagnosis of hypertension with no evidence of end organ damage and no other treatments for alleged conditions being received or any evidence of limitations.

The determination of the Social Security Administration ALJ dated February 25, 2010 is being adopted. There was evidence of significant medical improvement. The medical evidence of record does not document a mental/physical impairment(s) that significantly limits the claimant's ability to perform basic work activities. Therefore, MA-P is denied per 20 CFR 416.921(a). Retroactive MA-P was

considered in this case and is also denied. SDA is denied per PEM 261 due to lack of severity. Social Security Listings 1.02, 1.03, 1.04, 3.02, 4.02, and 11.14 were considered in making this determination.

9. The claimant is a 59 year-old man whose date of birth is [REDACTED]. The claimant is 5' 8" tall and weighs 176 pounds. The claimant has a high school diploma. The claimant has just started this semester at the [REDACTED] taking college courses. The claimant can read or write and do basic math. The claimant was last employed in 2005 as a maintenance worker at the medium level. The claimant was previously employed as a roofer at the heavy level, team leader at the light level, and cheese molder at the light level.
10. The claimant's alleged impairments are degenerative disc disease, high blood pressure that's controlled with medication, chronic pain, emphysema, leaky heart valve, and migraines.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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 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 Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

"Disability" is:

...the inability to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.... 20 CFR 416.905.

...We follow a set order to determine whether you are disabled. We review any current work activity, the severity of your impairment(s), your residual functional capacity, your past work, and your age, education and work experience. If we can find that you are disabled or not disabled at any point in the review, we do not review your claim further.... 20 CFR 416.920.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

...Medical reports should include --

- (1) Medical history.

- (2) Clinical findings (such as the results of physical or mental status examinations);
- (3) Laboratory findings (such as blood pressure, X-rays);
- (4) Diagnosis (statement of disease or injury based on its signs and symptoms).... 20 CFR 416.913(b).

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

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

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

It must allow us to determine --

- (1) The nature and limiting effects of your impairment(s) for any period in question;
- (2) The probable duration of your impairment; and

- (3) Your residual functional capacity to do work-related physical and mental activities. 20 CFR 416.913(d).

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

...You can only be found disabled if you are unable to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death, or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. See 20 CFR 416.905. Your impairment must result from anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which are demonstrable by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques.... 20 CFR 416.927(a)(1).

...Evidence that you submit or that we obtain may contain medical opinions. Medical opinions are statements from physicians and psychologists or other acceptable medical sources that reflect judgments about the nature and severity of your impairment(s), including your symptoms, diagnosis and prognosis, what you can still do despite impairment(s), and your physical or mental restrictions. 20 CFR 416.927(a)(2).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Federal regulations require that the department use the same operative definition for “disabled” as used for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. 42 CFR 435.540(a).

“Disability” is:

...the inability to do any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months ... 20 CFR 416.905

In determining whether an individual is disabled, 20 CFR 416.920 requires the trier of fact to follow a sequential evaluation process by which current work activity, the severity of the impairment(s), residual functional capacity, and vocational factors (i.e., age, education, and work experience) are assessed in that order. When a determination that an individual is or is not disabled can be made at any step in the sequential evaluation, evaluation under a subsequent step is not necessary.

The department’s Program Eligibility Manual provides the following policy statements and instructions for caseworkers regarding the SDA program.

DISABILITY – SDA

DEPARTMENT POLICY

SDA

To receive SDA, a person must be disabled, caring for a disabled person, or age 65 or older.

Note: There is no disability requirement for AMP. PEM 261, p. 1.

DISABILITY

A person is disabled for SDA purposes if he:

- . receives other specified disability-related benefits or services, or
- . resides in a qualified Special Living Arrangement facility, or
- . is certified as unable to work due to mental or physical disability for at least 90 days from the onset of the disability.

- . is diagnosed as having Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

If the client's circumstances change so that the basis of his/her disability is no longer valid, determine if he/she meets any of the other disability criteria. Do NOT simply initiate case closure. PEM, Item 261, p. 1.

Other Benefits or Services

Persons receiving one of the following benefits or services meet the SDA disability criteria:

- . Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance (RSDI), due to disability or blindness.
- . Supplemental Security Income (SSI), due to disability or blindness.
- . Medicaid (including spend-down) as blind or disabled if the disability/blindness is based on:
 - .. a DE/MRT/SRT determination, or
 - .. a hearing decision, or
 - .. having SSI based on blindness or disability recently terminated (within the past 12 months) for financial reasons.

Medicaid received by former SSI recipients based on policies in PEM 150 under "**SSI TERMINATIONS,**" INCLUDING "**MA While Appealing Disability Termination,**" does not qualify a person as disabled for SDA. Such persons must be certified as disabled or meet one of the other SDA qualifying criteria. See "**Medical Certification of Disability**" below.

- . Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS). A person is receiving services if he has been determined eligible for MRS and has an active MRS case. Do not refer or advise applicants to apply for MRS for the purpose of qualifying for SDA.
- . Special education services from the local intermediate school district. To qualify, the person may be:

- .. attending school under a special education plan approved by the local Individual Educational Planning Committee (IEPC); **or**
 - .. not attending under an IEPC approved plan but has been certified as a special education student **and** is attending a school program leading to a high school diploma or its equivalent, **and** is under age 26. The program does not have to be designated as “special education” as long as the person has been certified as a special education student. Eligibility on this basis continues until the person completes the high school program or reaches age 26, whichever is earlier.
- . Refugee or asylee who lost eligibility for Social Security Income (SSI) due to exceeding the maximum time limit PEM, Item 261, pp. 1-2.

First, the trier of fact must determine if the individual is working and if the work is substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.920(b). At Step 1, the claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity and has not worked since 2005. Therefore, the claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

Secondly, in order to be considered disabled for purposes of MA, a person must have a severe impairment. 20 CFR 416.920(c). A severe impairment is an impairment which significantly limits an individual’s physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities. Basic work activities means, the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. Examples of these include:

- (1) Physical functions such as walking, standing, sitting, lifting, pushing, pulling, reaching, carrying or handling;
- (2) Capacities for seeing, hearing, and speaking;
- (3) Understanding, carrying out, and remembering simple instructions;
- (4) Use of judgment;
- (5) Responding appropriately to supervision, co-workers and usual work situations; and
- (6) Dealing with changes in a routine work setting. 20 CFR 416.921(b).

The purpose of the second step in the sequential evaluation process is to screen out claims lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v. Bowen* 880 F2d 860, 862 (6th Cir, 1988). As a result, the department may only screen out claims at this level which are “totally groundless” solely from a medical standpoint. The *Higgs* court used the severity requirement as a “*de minimus* hurdle” in the disability determination. The *de minimus* standard is a provision of a law that allows the court to disregard trifling matters.

The objective medical evidence on the record further substantiates the following:

On [REDACTED], the claimant underwent an independent consultative evaluation for high blood pressure, back pain, and numbness in hands and feet. The independent medical consultant’s conclusion was that for back pain that the claimant’s condition was primarily due to musculoskeletal pain, although an element of degenerative disc disease could be present. Straight leg raising was negative and no evidence of nerve root irritation appreciated. The claimant did not require the use of an assistive device to ambulate. For hypertension, the claimant’s blood pressure was considered elevated at 170/110. Repeat testing and modification of the claimant’s medical regimen as necessary was supported. There was no evidence of decompensated heart failure appreciated. The claimant’s motor and sensory function appeared intact with negative Romberg testing. Straight leg raising was negative in seated and supine positions. There was no radiating pain elicited. Positive sense of both great toes was intact with no disorientation noted. The claimant smokes one pack of cigarettes daily and drinks alcohol on the weekends. The claimant had a normal physical examination except for the previously cited increase in blood pressure. There was no tenderness, erythema, or effusion noted of any joint. Grip and pincher strength were intact. Dexterity appeared unimpaired. There was no edema. The claimant had no difficulty getting on and off the examination table, no difficulty heel and toe walking, mild difficulty squatting and arising, mild difficulty balancing, declined to attempt hopping, and mild difficulty with tandem walk. Department Exhibit 4-7.

On [REDACTED], the claimant underwent a nuclear exam report with [REDACTED]. The claimant post-stress gated ejection fraction was 36% with the left ventricle dilated. There was moderate global hypokinesia. The treating specialist’s conclusion was abnormal gated SPECT study with moderate reduction in global left ventricular systolic function as outlined above. Department Exhibit 57.

On [REDACTED], the claimant saw his treating specialist for an echocardiography report. The treating specialist’s impression was moderate hypertrophic dilated cardiomyopathy as described above, with an estimated left ventricular ejection fraction of 40%. There was moderate tricuspid regurgitation and pulmonary hypertension. Department Exhibit 54-56.

On [REDACTED], the claimant saw his treating specialist that states that the claimant is 59 years old and needs hemorrhoid surgery and has a very premature family history of coronary disease along with hypertension and cigarette smoking. As such, he is at a statistically increased risk of having coronary disease himself. The claimant had an

abnormal EKG on [REDACTED] that showed specifically normal sinus rhythm, 69 beats per minute, with left ventricular hypertrophy by voltage criteria along with non-specific ST and T-wave changes. The claimant is currently describing symptoms consistent with a developing chronic heart failure in that he has increased dyspnea on exertion, which is now functional class II along with mild complaints of PND and orthopnea as described. The claimant was continued on his medication with an echocardiogram and exercise stress test scheduled. Department Exhibit 51-52.

On [REDACTED], the claimant saw his treating physician who made a progress note. The claimant had a history of high blood pressure, angina, shortness of breath, and cardiomegaly. Department Exhibit 9.

On [REDACTED], the claimant's treating physician submitted a progress note on the claimant's behalf. The claimant had hemorrhoids that resulted in bloody stool. He had hip pain and degenerative disc disease with arthritis involving the lumbar spine with high blood pressure that was controlled. Department Exhibit 10.

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence in the record indicates that the claimant has established that he has a severe impairment. The claimant has heart issues, but continues to smoke a pack of cigarettes a day. His high blood pressure is controlled with medication, but during the independent medical consultative exam it was high. Therefore, the claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 2. However, this Administrative Law Judge will proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine disability because Step 2 is a *de minimus* standard.

In the third step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment (or combination of impairments) is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant's medical record will not support a finding that 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). This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant's impairments do not rise to the level necessary to be listed as disabling by law. Therefore, the claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 3.

In the fourth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment(s) prevents claimant from doing past relevant work. 20 CFR 416.920(e). It is the finding of this Administrative Law Judge, based upon the medical evidence and objective, physical and psychological findings that the claimant does not have a driver's license and does not drive because his license was suspended. The claimant does cook very simple meals. The claimant does not grocery shop, but will go with someone else because he has a problem with standing. The claimant doesn't clean his own home or do any outside work. His hobby is watching TV. The claimant felt that his condition has worsened in the past year

because he is having chest pain, black splotchy spots in eyes, and his hands and feet locking up. The claimant stated that he does not have any mental impairment.

The claimant wakes up between 4:00 to 6:00 a.m. He has coffee and watches the news. He watches his son. He answers the phone and takes messages. He goes to bed between 10:00 to 11:00 p.m.

The claimant felt that he could walk 2 blocks. The claimant felt he could stand was one hour. The longest he felt he could sit was 45-50 minutes. The heaviest weight he felt could carry and walk was 25 pounds. The claimant stated level of pain on a scale from 1 to 10 without medication is a 9 that decreases or stays the same to a 9-6 with medication.

The claimant stated that he smokes 10 cigarettes a day. He drinks wine on the weekends. He stopped smoking marijuana in August 2008. The claimant felt that he could still work as a counselor.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant has not established that he cannot perform any of his prior work. The claimant was previously employed as a team leader and a cheese molder at the light level. With the claimant's heart issues and back issues, he should still be able to perform light work. The claimant may not be able to lift the weight of a maintenance worker at the medium level of 50+ pounds and at the heavy level at 75+ pounds on a full-time basis. Therefore, the claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 4. However, the Administrative Law Judge will still proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine whether or not the claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his prior jobs.

In the fifth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment(s) prevents 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.

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

same meaning as they have in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, published by the Department of Labor.... 20 CFR 416.967.

Sedentary work. Sedentary work involves lifting no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. Although a sedentary job is defined as one which involves sitting, a certain amount of walking and standing is often necessary in carrying out job duties. Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. 20 CFR 416.967(a).

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).

...To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, you must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. If someone can do light work, we determine that he or she can also do sedentary work, unless there are additional limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. 20 CFR 416.967(b).

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

At Step 5, the claimant should be able to meet the physical requirements of light work, based upon the claimant's physical abilities. Under the Medical-Vocational guidelines, an advanced age individual with a high school education, and an unskilled and skilled work history, who is limited to light work, is not considered disabled. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Rule 202.05. Using the Medical-Vocational guidelines as a framework for making this decision and after giving full consideration to the claimant's physical impairments, the Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant can still perform a wide range of light activities and that the claimant does not meet the definition of disabled under the MA program.

In general, claimant has the responsibility to prove that he/she is disabled. Claimant's impairment must result from anatomical, physiological, or psychological

abnormalities which can be shown by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques. A physical or mental impairment must be established by medical evidence consisting of signs, symptoms, and laboratory findings, not only claimant's statement of symptoms. 20 CFR 416.908; 20 CFR 416.927. Proof must be in the form of medical evidence showing that the claimant has an impairment and the nature and extent of its severity. 20 CFR 416.912. Information must be sufficient to enable a determination as to the nature and limiting effects of the impairment for the period in question, the probable duration of the impairment and the residual functional capacity to do work-related physical and mental activities. 20 CFR 416.913.

Once an individual has been determined to be "disabled" for purposes of disability benefits, continued entitlement to benefits must be periodically reviewed. In evaluating whether an individual's disability continues, 20 CFR 416.994 requires the trier of fact to follow a sequential evaluation process by which current work activities, severity of impairment(s), and the possibility of medical improvement and its relationship to the individual's ability to work are assessed. Review may cease and benefits may be continued at any point if there is substantial evidence to find that the individual is unable to engage in substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5).

First, the trier of fact must determine if the individual is working and if work is substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5)(i). In this case, the claimant is not substantially gainfully employed and has not worked since 2005. See analysis, Step 1. Therefore, the claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

Secondly, if the individual has an impairment or combination of impairments which meet or equal the severity of an impairment listed in Appendix 1 to Subpart P of Part 404 of Chapter 20, disability is found to continue. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5)(ii). In this case, the claimant's impairments or combination of impairments do not meet or equal the severity of an impairment listed in Appendix 1. See analysis, Step 3. Therefore, the claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 2.

In the third step of the sequential evaluation, the trier of fact must determine whether there has been medical improvement as defined in 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(i). 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5)(iii). Medical improvement is defined as any decrease in the medical severity of the impairment(s) which was present at the time of the most recent favorable medical decision that the claimant was disabled or continues to be disabled. A determination that there has been a decrease in medical severity must be based on changes (improvement) in the symptoms, signs, and/or laboratory findings associated with claimant's impairment(s). If there has been medical improvement as shown by a decrease in medical severity, the trier of fact must proceed to Step 4 (which examines whether the medical improvement is related to the claimant's ability to do work). If there has been no decrease in medical severity and thus no medical improvement, the trier of fact moves to Step 5 in the sequential evaluation process.

In this case, the claimant has had medical improvement resulting in a decrease in medical severity. See analysis, Step 2. The claimant still has some heart issues and

some limitations with his back, but has had significant medical improvement since his MRT approval on April 25, 2008. Therefore, the claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 3.

In Step 4 of the sequential evaluation, the trier of fact must determine whether medical improvement is related to claimant's ability to do work in accordance with 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(i) through (b)(1)(iv). 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5)(iv). It is the finding of this Administrative Law Judge, after careful review of the record, that there has been medical improvement. See analysis, Step 5.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant's medical improvement is related to his ability to do work. The claimant should be able to perform light work. Therefore, the claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 4. If there is a finding of medical improvement related to claimant's ability to perform work, the trier of fact is to move to Step 6 in the sequential evaluation process.

In the sixth step of the sequential evaluation, the trier of fact is to determine whether the claimant's current impairment(s) is severe per 20 CFR 416.921. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5)(vi). If the residual functional capacity assessment reveals significant limitations upon a claimant's ability to engage in basic work activities, the trier of fact moves to Step 7 in the sequential evaluation process. See analysis, Step 2. In this case, the Administrative Law Judge finds the claimant retains the residual functional capacity to perform light work. Therefore, the claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 6. See analysis, Steps 2, 4, and 5.

In the seventh step of the sequential evaluation, the trier of fact is to assess a claimant's current ability to engage in substantial gainful activities in accordance with 20 CFR 416.960 through 416.969. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5)(vii). The trier of fact is to assess the claimant's current residual functional capacity based on all current impairments and consider whether the claimant can still do work he/she has done in the past. See analysis, Step 4.

In this case, the Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant retains the capacity to perform at least light work. Therefore, the claimant does retain the capacity to perform his past relevant work and is denied at Step 7. See analysis, Step 4.

In the final step, Step 8, of the sequential evaluation, the trier of fact is to consider whether the claimant can do any other work, given the claimant's residual function capacity and claimant's age, education, and past work experience. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5)(viii). See analysis, Step 5. Therefore, the claimant is disqualified from receiving continued MA benefits because he does have medical improvement. The record does not establish that the claimant continues to qualify for continued MA-P benefits.

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 that it was acting in compliance with department policy when it denied the claimant's application for SDA application and determined that the claimant was no longer eligible for continued MA-P benefits. The claimant should be able to perform a wide range of light work. The department has established its case by a preponderance of the evidence.

Accordingly, the department's decision is **AFFIRMED**.

/s/
Carmen G. Fahie
Administrative Law Judge
For Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: September 15, 2010

Date Mailed: September 16, 2010

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.

CGF / vc

cc:

