

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2010-44587
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Load No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: August 30, 2010
DHS County: Macomb (36)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Linda Steadley Schwarb

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 hearing was held on August 30, 2010. Claimant appeared and testified. Claimant was represented by [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (DHS or department) properly determine that claimant is not "disabled" for purposes of the Medical Assistance (MA-P) programs?

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 February 19, 2010, an application was filed on claimant's behalf for MA-P benefits. The application requested MA-P retroactive to November of 2009.
2. On April 6, 2010, the department denied claimant's application for benefits based upon the belief that claimant did not meet the requisite disability criteria.
3. On June 30, 2010, a hearing request was filed to protest the department's determination.
4. Claimant, age 41, has college education from [REDACTED]. Claimant speaks, reads, and writes in English very well.

5. Claimant last worked in 2000 as a restaurant owner. Claimant has also performed relevant work as an auto repair person.
6. Claimant has a right posterior frontal lobe arteriovenous malformation with a history of occasional left-sided weakness, occurring every two to three days and lasting approximately ten to fifteen minutes.
7. Claimant was hospitalized [REDACTED] when he came to the hospital following an unusually intense bout of left-sided weakness. The weakness had resolved by the time claimant reached the hospital. A CT of the head on [REDACTED] documented a right posterior frontal lobe arteriovenous malformation. Claimant was discharged with a diagnosis of transient ischemic attack; left-sided weakness, headache and dizziness; right large frontotemporal arteriovenous malformation which is inoperable; history of TIA; and tobacco abuse.
8. Claimant has had no further hospitalizations.
9. Claimant continues to suffer with transient left-sided weakness occurring every two to three days, lasting approximately ten to fifteen minutes which is thought to be the result of a right posterior frontal lobe arteriovenous malformation.
10. Claimant has severe limitations upon his ability to engage in heavy exertional activities. Claimant's limitations have lasted or are expected to last twelve months or more.
11. Claimant's complaints and allegations concerning his impairments and limitations, when considered in light of all objective medical evidence, as well as the record as a whole, reflect an individual who, at the very least, has the physical and mental capacity to engage in unskilled light work activities on a regular and continuing basis.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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 Program Administrative Manual (BAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

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 general, claimant has the responsibility to prove that he 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.

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.

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). In this case, claimant is not working. Therefore, claimant may not be disqualified for MA at this step in the sequential evaluation process.

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.

In this case, claimant has presented the required medical data and evidence necessary to support a finding that he has significant physical limitations upon his ability to perform basic work activities such as lifting extremely heavy objects. Medical evidence has clearly established that claimant has an impairment (or combination of impairments) that has more than a minimal effect on claimant’s work activities. See Social Security Rulings 85-28, 88-13, and 82-63.

In the third step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant’s impairment (or combination of impairments) is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant’s medical record will not support a finding that claimant’s impairment(s) is a “listed impairment” or equal to a listed impairment. See Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404, Part A. Accordingly, claimant cannot be found to be disabled based upon medical evidence alone. 20 CFR 416.920(d).

In the fourth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant’s impairment(s) prevents claimant from doing past relevant work. 20 CFR 416.920(e). It is the finding of this Administrative Law Judge, based upon the medical evidence and objective physical findings, that claimant may not be not capable of the heavy lifting required by his past employment as a restaurant owner and/or automobile repair person. Claimant has presented the required medical data and evidence necessary to support a finding that he is not, at this point, capable of performing such work.

In the fifth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant’s impairment(s) prevents claimant from doing other work. 20 CFR 416.920(f). This determination is based upon the claimant’s:

- (1) residual functional capacity defined simply as “what can you still do despite you limitations?” 20 CFR 416.945;

- (2) age, education, and work experience, 20 CFR 416.963-.965; and
- (3) the kinds of work which exist in significant numbers in the national economy which the claimant could perform despite his/her limitations. 20 CFR 416.966.

See *Felton v DSS*, 161 Mich. App 690, 696 (1987).

This Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant's residual functional capacity for work activities on a regular and continuing basis does include the ability to meet the physical and mental demands required to perform light work. Light work is defined as follows:

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).

Objective medical evidence, signs, and symptoms as well as the hearing record as a whole, support a determination that claimant is capable of performing the physical and mental activities necessary for a wide range of light work activities. Claimant testified that, since approximately [REDACTED], he had been experiencing transient bouts of left-sided weakness which occur every two to three days and last approximately ten to fifteen minutes. Claimant sought medical evaluation for a bout of left-sided weakness on [REDACTED]. A CT of the head performed on [REDACTED], documented a right posterior frontal lobe arteriovenous malformation. Claimant reported to the hospital that his left-sided weakness occurred every two to three days and "lasted usually ten to fifteen minutes at the most." Claimant was discharged on [REDACTED], with the advice of continuing a regular diet and "do physical activity as tolerated but avoid strenuous activity." Claimant has had no further hospitalization, no further medical treatment, and does not take any prescriptions. At the hearing, claimant reported that he does drive and, in fact, drove to the hearing. Claimant testified that he had no problems with walking, standing, and sitting. He testified that, with his left arm, he can lift ten to fifteen pounds and has no problems lifting with his dominate right arm. Claimant indicated that he is capable of bending and stooping without problems. Claimant testified that, when he experiences a bout of left side weakness, he usually sits and waits for it to end.

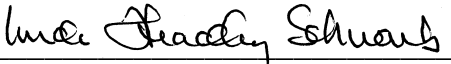
After careful review of the entire hearing record, the undersigned finds that the record does not establish limitations which would compromise claimant's ability to perform a wide range of light work activities on a regular and continuing basis. The record does not support the position that claimant is incapable of all work activities.

Considering that claimant, at age 41, is a younger individual, has a college education from [REDACTED], has an unskilled work history, and has a sustained work capacity for light work activities, the undersigned finds that claimant's impairments do not prevent him from engaging in other work. See 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Table 2, Rule 202.20. Further, even if claimant was limited to performing sedentary work, he would still be found capable of performing substantial gainful activity. See Rule 201.27. Accordingly, the undersigned must find that claimant is not presently disabled for purposes of the MA program.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the Department of Human Services properly determined that claimant is not "disabled" for purposes of the Medical Assistance program.

Accordingly, the department's determination in this matter is hereby affirmed.


Linda Steadley Schwarb
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: September 7, 2010

Date Mailed: September 7, 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.

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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.

LSS/pf

cc:

