

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED] 1

Reg. No.: 2011 45097  
Issue No.: 2009  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: November 30, 2011  
Oakland County DHS (02)

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Lynn M. Ferris

**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 conducted from Detroit, Michigan on Tuesday, November 30, 2011. The Claimant appeared, along with [REDACTED], her authorized hearing representative, and testified. [REDACTED], ES appeared on behalf of the Department of Human Services ("Department").

**ISSUE**

Whether the Department properly determined that the Claimant was not disabled for purposes of the Medical Assistance ("MA-P") benefit program?

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

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

1. The Claimant submitted an application for public assistance seeking MA-P and retro MA – P benefits on May 27, 2011.
2. On June 23, 2011, the Medical Review Team ("MRT") determined that the Claimant was not disabled. (Exhibit 1)
3. On July 1, 2011, the Department notified the Claimant of the MRT determination. (Exhibit 1)

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4. On July 20, 2011, the Department received the Claimant's timely written request for hearing. (Exhibit 1)
5. On August 29, 2011, the State Hearing Review Team ("SHRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 2)
6. The Claimant alleges mental disabling impairments due to depression and anxiety.
7. At the time of hearing, the Claimant was 52 years old with a [REDACTED] birth date; was 5'5" in height; and weighed approximately 148 pounds.
8. The Claimant has a limited education, 11<sup>th</sup> grade with an employment history as waitress and lunch truck driver.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The Medical Assistance program is established by Subchapter XIX of Chapter 7 of The Public Health & Welfare Act, 42 USC 1397, and is administered by the Department of Human Services, formerly known as the Family Independence Agency, 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 Bridges Reference Tables ("RFT").

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). The person claiming a physical or mental disability has the burden to establish it through the use of competent medical evidence from qualified medical sources such as his or her medical history, clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescribed treatment, prognosis for recovery and/or medical assessment of ability to do work-related activities or ability to reason and make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is alleged. 20 CFR 413.913. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.908; 20 CFR 416.929(a). Similarly, conclusory statements by a physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind, absent supporting medical evidence, is insufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.927.

When determining disability, the federal regulations require several factors to be considered including: (1) the location/duration/frequency/intensity of an applicant's pain; (2) the type/dosage/effectiveness/side effects of any medication the applicant takes to relieve pain; (3) any treatment other than pain medication that the applicant has

received to relieve pain; and (4) the effect of the applicant's pain on his or her ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3). The applicant's pain must be assessed to determine the extent of his or her functional limitation(s) in light of the objective medical evidence presented. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(2).

In order to determine whether or not an individual is disabled, federal regulations require a five-step sequential evaluation process be utilized. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(1). The five-step analysis requires the trier of fact to consider an individual's current work activity; the severity of the impairment(s) both in duration and whether it meets or equals a listed impairment in Appendix 1; residual functional capacity to determine whether an individual can perform past relevant work; and residual functional capacity along with vocational factors (i.e. age, education, and work experience) to determine if an individual can adjust to other work. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945.

If an individual is found disabled, or not disabled, at any step, a determination or decision is made with no need evaluate subsequent steps. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If a determination cannot be made that an individual is disabled, or not disabled, at a particular step, the next step is required. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If an impairment does not meet or equal a listed impairment, an individual's residual functional capacity is assessed before moving from step three to step four. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945. Residual functional capacity is the most an individual can do despite the limitations based on all relevant evidence. 20 CFR 945(a)(1). An individual's residual functional capacity assessment is evaluated at both steps four and five. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). In determining disability, an individual's functional capacity to perform basic work activities is evaluated and if found that the individual has the ability to perform basic work activities without significant limitation, disability will not be found. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(iv). In general, the individual has the responsibility to prove disability. 20 CFR 416.912(a). An impairment or combination of impairments is not severe if it does not significantly limit an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.921(a). The individual has the responsibility to provide evidence of prior work experience; efforts to work; and any other factor showing how the impairment affects the ability to work. 20 CFR 416.912(c)(3)(5)(6).

In addition to the above, when evaluating mental impairments, a special technique is utilized. 20 CFR 416.920a(a). First, an individual's pertinent symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings are evaluated to determine whether a medically determinable mental impairment exists. 20 CFR 416.920a(b)(1). When a medically determinable mental impairment is established, the symptoms, signs and laboratory findings that substantiate the impairment are documented to include the individual's significant history, laboratory findings, and functional limitations. 20 CFR 416.920a(e)(2). Functional limitation(s) is assessed based upon the extent to which the impairment(s) interferes with an individual's ability to function independently, appropriately, effectively, and on a sustained basis. *Id.*; 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(2). Chronic mental disorders, structured

settings, medication, and other treatment and the effect on the overall degree of functionality is considered. 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(1). In addition, four broad functional areas (activities of daily living; social functioning; concentration, persistence or pace; and episodes of decompensation) are considered when determining an individual's degree of functional limitation. 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(3). The degree of limitation for the first three functional areas is rated by a five point scale: none, mild, moderate, marked, and extreme. 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(4). A four point scale (none, one or two, three, four or more) is used to rate the degree of limitation in the fourth functional area. *Id.* The last point on each scale represents a degree of limitation that is incompatible with the ability to do any gainful activity. *Id.*

After the degree of functional limitation is determined, the severity of the mental impairment is determined. 20 CFR 416.920a(d). If severe, a determination of whether the impairment meets or is the equivalent of a listed mental disorder is made. 20 CFR 416.920a(d)(2). If the severe mental impairment does not meet (or equal) a listed impairment, an individual's residual functional capacity is assessed. 20 CFR 416.920a(d)(3).

As outlined above, the first step looks at the individual's current work activity. In the record presented, the Claimant is not involved in substantial gainful activity therefore is not ineligible for disability benefits under Step 1.

The severity of the Claimant's alleged impairment(s) is considered under Step 2. The Claimant bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairments. In order to be considered disabled for MA purposes, the impairment must be severe. 20 CFR 916.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(b). An impairment, or combination of impairments, is severe if it significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities regardless of age, education and work experience. 20 CFR 916.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(c). Basic work activities means the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. 20 CFR 916.921(b). Examples 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.

*Id.*

The second step allows for dismissal of a disability claim obviously lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v Bowen*, 880 F2d 860, 862 (CA 6, 1988). The severity requirement may still be employed as an administrative convenience to screen out claims that are totally groundless solely from a medical standpoint. *Id.* at 863 citing *Farris v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 773 F2d 85, 90 n.1 (CA 6, 1985). An impairment qualifies as non-severe only if, regardless of a Claimant's age, education, or work experience, the impairment would not affect the Claimant's ability to work. *Salmi v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 774 F2d 685, 692 (CA 6, 1985).

In the present case, the Claimant alleges disability due to depression and anxiety. The Claimant testified that her depression began after the birth of her child in 1996.

On May 23, 2011 Claimant attended a psychiatric appointment and was examined and evaluated. The diagnosis was Major Depressive Disorder, Recurrent. The GAF score was 45. The Claimant is currently treated by the psychiatrist who performed the evaluation.

As previously noted, the Claimant bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairment(s). As summarized above, the Claimant has presented medical evidence establishing that she does have some mental limitations on her ability to perform basic work activities. The medical evidence has established that the Claimant has an impairment, or combination thereof, that has more than a *de minimus* effect on the Claimant's basic work activities. Further, the impairments have lasted continuously for twelve months; therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receipt of MA-P benefits under Step 2.

In the third step of the sequential analysis 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. The Claimant has alleged mental disabling impairments due to depression and anxiety.

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Listing 12.04 defines affective disorders as being characterized by a disturbance of mood, accompanied by a full or partial manic or depressive syndrome. Generally, affective disorders involve either depression or elation. The required level of severity for these disorders is met when the requirements of both A and B are satisfied, or when the requirements in C are satisfied.

A. Medically documented persistence, either continuous or intermittent, of one of the following:

1. Depressive syndrome characterized by at least four of the following:

- a. Anhedonia or pervasive loss of interest in almost all activities; or
- b. Appetite disturbance with change in weight; or
- c. Sleep disturbance; or
- d. Psychomotor agitation or retardation; or
- e. Decreased energy; or
- f. Feelings of guilt or worthlessness; or
- g. Difficulty concentrating or thinking; or
- h. Thoughts of suicide; or
- i. Hallucinations, delusions, or paranoid thinking; or

2. Manic syndrome characterized by at least three of the following:

- a. Hyperactivity; or
- b. Pressure of speech; or
- c. Flight of ideas; or
- d. Inflated self-esteem; or
- e. Decreased need for sleep; or
- f. Easy distractability; or
- g. Involvement in activities that have a high probability of painful consequences which are not recognized; or
- h. Hallucinations, delusions, or paranoid thinking; or

3. Bipolar syndrome with a history of episodic periods manifested by the full symptomatic picture of both manic and depressive syndromes (and currently characterized by either or both syndromes)

AND

B. Resulting in at least two of the following:

- 1. Marked restriction on activities of daily living; or
- 2. Marked difficulties in maintaining social functioning; or
- 3. Marked difficulties in maintaining concentration, persistence, or pace; or

4. Repeated episodes of decompensation, each of extended duration;
- OR
- C. Medically documented history of chronic affective disorder of at least 2 years' duration that has caused more than a minimal limitation of ability to do basic work activities, with symptoms or signs currently attenuated by medication or psychosocial support, and one of the following:
1. Repeated episodes of decompensation, each of extended duration; or
  2. A residual disease process that has resulted in such marginal adjustment that even minimal increase in mental demands or change in the environment would be predicted to cause the individual to decompensate; or
  3. Current history of 1 or more years' inability to function outside a highly supportive living arrangement, with an indication of continued need for such an arrangement.

In this case, the record reveals treatment for depression and anxiety. A Mental Residual Functional Capacity Assessment completed by the Claimant's treating psychiatrist documents that the Claimant exhibits some of the symptoms in part A, above, but none of the part B criteria are rated in the Assessment as marked. In the Mental Residual Functional Capacity Assessment the Claimant's examining doctor evaluated 20 categories assessing the Claimant's mental capacity for various activities. Twenty separate categories are assessed and are rated as meeting one of four ratings: (1) Not significantly limited; (2) Moderately Limited; (3) Markedly Limited and (4) No evidence of limitation. The Claimant received 14 ratings where she was evaluated as Not Significantly Limited, 6 ratings as Moderately Limited. None of the evaluative ratings were assessed as Marked. Because none of the categories evaluated were categorized as "Marked" the Claimant has not satisfied the Part B requirements in order to equal or meet a listing, nor were the requirements of Part C met.

Ultimately, based on the medical evidence, it is found that the Claimant's impairment(s) do not meet the intent and severity requirements of a listed impairment. Accordingly, the Claimant's eligibility is considered under Step 4. 20 CFR 416.905(a).

The fourth step in analyzing a disability claim requires an assessment of the Claimant's residual functional capacity ("RFC") and past relevant employment. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4)(iv). An individual is not disabled if he/she can perform past relevant work. Id.; 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3). Past relevant work is work that has been performed within

the past 15 years that was a substantial gainful activity and that lasted long enough for the individual to learn the position. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(1). Vocational factors of age, education, and work experience, and whether the past relevant employment exists in significant numbers in the national economy is not considered. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3). RFC is assessed based on impairment(s), and any related symptoms, such as pain, which may cause physical and mental limitations that affect what can be done in a work setting. RFC is the most that can be done, despite the limitations.

To determine the physical demands (exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, jobs are classified as sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very heavy. 20 CFR 416.967. Sedentary work involves lifting of no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. 20 CFR 416.967(a). 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. *Id.* Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing up to 10 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(b). Even though 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. *Id.* To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, an individual must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. *Id.* An individual capable of light work is also capable of sedentary work, unless there are additionally limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. *Id.* Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(c). An individual capable of performing medium work is also capable of light and sedentary work. *Id.* Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(d). An individual capable of heavy work is also capable of medium, light, and sedentary work. *Id.* Finally, very heavy work involves lifting objects weighing more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing 50 pounds or more. 20 CFR 416.967(e). An individual capable of very heavy work is able to perform work under all categories. *Id.*

Limitations or restrictions which affect the ability to meet the demands of jobs other than strength demands (exertional requirements, i.e. sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling) are considered nonexertional. 20 CFR 416.969a(a). In considering whether an individual can perform past relevant work, a comparison of the individual's residual functional capacity with the demands of past relevant work. *Id.* If an individual can no longer do past relevant work the same residual functional capacity assessment along with an individual's age, education, and work experience is considered to determine whether an individual can adjust to other work which exists in the national economy. *Id.* Examples of non-exertional limitations or restrictions include



difficulty functioning due to nervousness, anxiousness, or depression; difficulty maintaining attention or concentration; difficulty understanding or remembering detailed instructions; difficulty in seeing or hearing; difficulty tolerating some physical feature(s) of certain work settings (i.e. can't tolerate dust or fumes); or difficulty performing the manipulative or postural functions of some work such as reaching, handling, stooping, climbing, crawling, or crouching. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(1)(i) – (vi). If the impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, only affect the ability to perform the non-exertional aspects of work-related activities, the rules in Appendix 2 do not direct factual conclusions of disabled or not disabled. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(2). The determination of whether disability exists is based upon the principles in the appropriate sections of the regulations, giving consideration to the rules for specific case situations in Appendix 2. *Id.*

The Claimant's prior work history consists of work as a waitress and lunch truck driver. As a lunch truck driver the Claimant drove a route to various factory locations to service her customers selling lunches and snacks to them. In light of the Claimant's testimony and in consideration of the Occupational Code, the Claimant's prior work is classified as unskilled, light work.

The Claimant testified that she is able to walk a mile; sit for up to an hour; stand for about 15 to 20 minutes out of an hour; lift/carry approximately 10 – 15 pounds; bend with no pain and has a little difficulty squatting; is able to climb stairs and can drive a car and possesses a chauffeur's license. The objective medical evidence does not contain any physical limitations or restrictions.

Mentally, the Claimant was assessed as moderately limited in the following areas: the ability to carry out detailed instructions; the ability to work in coordination with or proximity to others without being distracted by them; the ability to interact appropriately with the general public; the ability to accept instructions and respond appropriately to criticism from supervisors; the ability to respond appropriately to change in the work setting; the ability to set realistic goals or make plans independently of others.

The Claimant was also found not significantly limited in her ability to carry out simple, one or two-step instructions; make simple work-related decisions; the ability to maintain attention and concentration for extended periods, the ability to get along with co worker or peers without distracting them or exhibiting behavioral extremes; ask simple questions or request assistance; maintain socially appropriate behavior and adhere to basic standards of neatness and cleanliness; and was aware of normal hazards and able to take appropriate precautions. The Claimant advised that recently (last three weeks) when driving she becomes confused and cannot remember where she was going and cited this recent condition as the basis why she could no longer drive a lunch truck. Given the recent nature of this symptom, and the fact that Claimant was medically evaluated as not significantly limited to travel in unfamiliar places, overall

does not sustain a permanent inability to drive especially in light of the fact that the Claimant can still drive.

The Claimant also reported having daily anxiety attacks of 10 minute average duration, and daily crying spells, and in the past up to 4 times weekly. The Claimant also reported frustration resulting in outbursts of anger and cited these reason as the most prominent reasons she could no longer be employed as a waitress of lunch truck driver. The objective medical evidence indicates that at her status exam with her treating psychiatrist, the Claimant was rated as having adequate concentration and attention, and adequate impulse control. The Claimant testified that she lost prior jobs due to these outbursts of anger, however, she also indicated in her medical social questionnaire that she was laid off. The evidence indicated that the Claimant was able to maintain her employment as a waitress for two year durations on several occasions.

Of more concern was the Claimant's testimony that she attempted suicide by driving her car into a roadside ditch approximately 3 months ago. There was no mention of this incident in the medical records which indicate the Claimant denied suicide attempts in the past and or entertained thoughts of suicide, nor did the Claimant advise her caseworker of the incident.

The Claimant is able to sustain the activities of daily living but reported that she loses concentration of where she is at with her cleaning activities, and while watching television loses track of what she is watching and cannot remember what happened. Comparing these complaints and symptoms with the evaluation by the Claimant's treating physician there is currently no objective medical evidence which support them.

The objective medical records do not contain any physical impairments. If the impairment or combination of impairments does not include physical limitations or marked mental limitations as is the case in this matter, a finding of disability is difficult to support (and not warranted). If the impairment or combination of impairments does not limit an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, it is not a severe impairment(s) and disability does not exist. 20 CFR 416.920. In consideration of the Claimant's testimony, medical records, and current limitations, it is found that the Claimant is able to return to past relevant work and, thus, the Claimant is found not disabled at Step 4.


#### **DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds the Claimant not disabled for purposes of the MA-P program.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED:

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The Department's determination is AFFIRMED.



Lynn M. Ferris  
Administrative Law Judge  
For Maura Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 12/13/11

Date Mailed: 12/13/11

**NOTICE:** Administrative Hearings may order a rehearing or reconsideration on either its own motion or at the request of a party within 30 days of the mailing date of this Decision and Order. Administrative Hearings will not order a rehearing or reconsideration on the Department's motion where the final decision cannot be implemented within 90 days of the filing of the original request.

The Claimant may appeal the Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the mailing of the Decision and Order or, if a timely request for rehearing was made, within 30 days of the receipt date of the rehearing decision.

Claimant may request a rehearing or reconsideration for the following reasons:

- A rehearing **MAY** be granted if there is newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome of the original hearing decision.
- A reconsideration **MAY** be granted for any of the following reasons:
  - misapplication of manual policy or law in the hearing decision,
  - typographical errors, mathematical error, or other obvious errors in the hearing decision that effect the substantial rights of the Claimant:
  - the failure of the ALJ to address other relevant issues in the hearing decision.

Request must be submitted through the local DHS office or directly to MAHS by mail at  
Michigan Administrative hearings  
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request  
P. O. Box 30639  
Lansing, Michigan 48909-07322

LMF/hw

cc: 

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