

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2011-7129
Issue No: 2009
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: March 10, 2011
Genesee #2 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 claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, an in-person hearing was held on Thursday, March 10, 2011. Claimant did not appear but was represented by his authorized representative, [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Did the department properly deny the 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 a material fact:

1. On April 27, 2010, the claimant applied for MA-P.
2. On July 29, 2010, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied the claimant's application for MA-P and retroactive MA-P stating that the claimant's impairment lacks duration of 12 months per 20 CFR 416.909.
3. On August 4, 2010, the department caseworker sent the claimant a notice that his application was denied.
4. On October 28, 2010, the department received a hearing request from the claimant, contesting the department's negative action.

5. On December 2, 2010, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) considered the submitted objective medical evidence in making its determination of MA-P, SDA, and retroactive MA-P for the claimant. The claimant alleges disability due to a fractured mandible, pinched nerve, neck and shoulder pain, and depression. The claimant's impairments do not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security listing. The medical evidence on the record indicates that the claimant condition improved with treatment. The claimant retains the capacity to perform all work. Therefore, MA-P is denied per the provision of 20 CFR 416.920©. Retroactive MA-P was reviewed and denied.
6. During the hearing on March 10, 2011, the authorized representative requested permission to submit additional medical information that needed to be reviewed by SHRT. Additional medical information was received from the local office and forwarded to SHRT for review on April 11, 2011.
7. On April 14, 2011, the SHRT considered the newly submitted objective medical evidence in making its determination of MA-P, SDA, and retroactive MA-P. The claimant is 24 years old with a less than high school education and a history of no gainful employment. He alleges disability secondary due to neck and shoulder pain, fractured nose, mandible, and left hand, poor vision, headaches, weight loss, learning disability, ADD, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, and personality disorder. The claimant's impairments do not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security listing. P.L. 104-121 and 20 CFR 416.935 are cited due to the materiality of drug and alcohol abuse. The medical evidence on the 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 the provision of 20 CFR 416.921 (a). Retroactive MA-P was reviewed and also denied.
8. The claimant is a [REDACTED] man whose date of birth is [REDACTED]. The claimant was not present for the hearing. The claimant completed the 11th grade of high school. The claimant had no pertinent work history.
9. The claimant's alleged impairments are neck and shoulder pain, fractured nose, mandible, and left hand, poor vision, headaches, weight loss, learning disability, ADD, depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, and personality disorder.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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.

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 no pertinent work history. 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 Administrative Law judge findings. The claimant was hospitalized at [REDACTED] on April 1, 2010 for an assault where the claimant sustained multiple trauma including fractures o the left hand and ct scan of the facial bones revealed a fracture left angle of the mandible as a nasal fracture. Department Exhibit 23.

On February 16, 2011, the claimant underwent an independent psychiatric evaluation with [REDACTED]. The claimant was diagnosed with polysubstance dependence and mood disorder, nos with a tier 2 diagnosis of borderline intellectual functioning. He was given a GAF of 45. His prognosis was guarded where the claimant lacks the motivation to stay consistently in psychological care. The claimant is not able to manage his benefit funds due is consistent drug use. He is able to understand, remember, complete simple repetitive tasks. Because of substance abuse, the claimant will be inconsistent in his performance at work and attendance. He will struggle more socially in that he has irritability and impulsiveness, which makes it difficult for him to interact appropriately in social situations or resolve conflicts without verbal aggression. There was no evidence of a thought disorder. Department Exhibit c-h.

The claimant’s treating psychiatrist conducted a crisis screening on behalf of the claimant at [REDACTED]. The claimant was diagnosed with bipolar I disorder, most recent episode manic, severe without psychotic features. He had a secondary diagnosis of bipolar disorder, nos with tertiary diagnosis of polysubstance dependence of cannabis and cocaine abuse and opiod and cocaine dependence. The claimant was given a GAF of 45. His mood was manic, anxious, and sad/depressed. His thought processes were logical and coherent. The claimant memory was intact. His judgment was impaired as the result of substance abuse. Department Exhibit 35-48.

On April 27, 2010, the claimant’s treating specialist of otolaryngology completed a Medical Examination Report, DHS-49, for the claimant. The claimant was first examined on April 1, 2010 and last examined on April 21, 2010. The claimant had a history of impairment, current diagnosis, and chief complaint of fractured mandible that was healing. The claimant jaw is wired shut until May 6, 2010. He had an essentially normal physical examination. The claimant was stable with limitations that were not expected to last more than 90 days. He could occasionally lift 10 pounds. His

standing/walking was limited to at least 2 hours and his sitting was limited to about 6 hours in an 8 hour workday. There were no assistive devices medically required or needed for ambulation. The claimant had no mental limitations. He could use his arms/hands and legs/feet for repetitive actions with a mild limitations for specific period of time for the removal of arch bars. The claimant could meet his needs in the home, but may need assistance with lifting. Department Exhibit 32-33.

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence in the record indicates that the claimant has established that he has a severe impairment. The claimant was assaulted in April 2010 that resulted in multiply facial fractures and fracture of the left hand. The claimant has not participated consistently in his mental health treatments. 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 was not present for his hearing.

At Step 4, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant has not established that he cannot perform any of his prior work because he has no pertinent work history on the record. 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.

...

Unskilled work. Unskilled work is work which needs little or no judgment to do simple duties that can be learned on the job in a short period of time. The job may or may not require considerable strength.... 20 CFR 416.968(a).

The objective medical evidence on the record is sufficient 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 and non-exertional.

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).

In the instant case, the claimant has mental impairments where he has not consistently participated in mental health treatments. See MA analysis step 2. The medical evidence on the record is sufficient to support a mental impairment that is so severe to prevent the claimant from performing skilled, detailed work, but the claimant should be able to perform simple, unskilled work.

At Step 5, the claimant cannot meet the physical requirements of work, based upon the claimant's physical abilities. Under the Medical-Vocational guidelines, a younger aged individual with a high school education, and unskilled work history, who is limited to work, is considered disabled. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Rule 204.00 (H). The Medical-Vocational guidelines are not strictly applied with non-exertional impairments such as bipolar disorder. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Section 200.00. Using the Medical-Vocational guidelines as a framework for making this decision and after

giving full consideration to the claimant's physical and mental impairments, the Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant could perform simple, unskilled work and that the claimant does not meet the definition of disabled under 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 has appropriately established that it was acting in compliance with department policy when it denied the claimant's application for MA-P, SDA, and retroactive MA-P. The claimant is capable of performing simple, unskilled 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 Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 3/6/12

Date Mailed: 3/6/12

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/ds

