

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No: 201212126
Issue No: 2009, 4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: January 31, 2012
Dickinson County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Kevin Scully

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge by authority of MCL 400.9 and MCL 400.37 upon Claimant's request for a hearing. Claimant's request for a hearing was received on November 9, 2011. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on Tuesday, January 31, 2012. During the hearing, Claimant waived the time period for the issuance of this decision in order to allow for the submission of additional medical evidence. The Claimant personally appeared and provided testimony and was represented by Hasan Abraham of [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (Department) properly determine that the Claimant did not meet the disability standard for Medical Assistance based on disability (MA-P) and State Disability Assistance (SDA)?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. On June 21, 2011, the Claimant submitted an application for Medical Assistance (MA) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits alleging disability.
2. On August 9, 2011, the Medical Review Team (MRT) determined that the Claimant did not meet the disability standard for Medical Assistance (MA-P) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) because it determined that his impairment does not meet the 12 month durational requirement.
3. On August 19, 2011, the Department sent the Claimant notice that it had denied the application for assistance.

4. On November 9, 2011, the Department received the Claimant's hearing request, protesting the denial of disability benefits.
5. On December 30, 2011, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) upheld the Medical Review Team's (MRT) denial of MA-P and SDA benefits.
6. On May 14, 2012, after reviewing the additional medical records, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) again upheld the determination of the Medical Review Team (MRT) that the Claimant does not meet the disability standard.
7. The Claimant applied for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits at the Social Security Administration (SSA).
8. The Social Security Administration (SSA) denied the Claimant's federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) application and the Claimant reported that a SSI appeal is pending.
9. The Claimant is a 51-year-old man whose birth date is [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] Claimant is 5' 10½" tall and weighs 207 pounds. The Claimant is a high school graduate. The Claimant is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
10. The Claimant was not engaged in substantial gainful activity at any time relevant to this matter.
11. The Claimant has past relevant work experience receiving and dispatching freight where he was required to manage and unload freight, and lift objects weighing as much as 90 pounds.
12. The Claimant alleges disability due to back problems, right leg muscle weakness, and memory problems.
13. On April 7, 2011, the objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant underwent right L3-L4 hemilaminectomy and disc excision for an acute herniated L3-L4 disc with caudal extrusion.
14. The objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant underwent a disc excision at the L4-L5 level.
15. The objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant has a history of right side sciatica.
16. The objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant has an antalgic gait and is capable of heel and toe walking.
17. The objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant suffers from a large right L3-4 herniated nucleus pulposus / extrusion with radiculopathy.

18. Medical reports indicate that physical therapy and injection therapy have nothing to offer the Claimant.
19. The objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant's chest is normal and without any pulmonary embolism.
20. The objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant has been diagnosed with hypertension not currently requiring medication as of April 8, 2011.
21. The objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant has been diagnosed with acute torticollis.
22. The Claimant testified that he is capable of walking a quarter mile, standing up to 60 minutes, and sitting for up to 30 minutes before he becomes uncomfortable.
23. The Claimant testified that he is capable of lifting 15 pounds frequently despite his impairments.
24. The Claimant testified that he is capable of preparing meals and performing non-impact exercises twice each week.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The regulations governing the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are found in the Michigan Administrative Code, MAC R 400.901 - 400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because his claim for assistance has been denied. MAC R 400.903. Clients have the right to contest a Department decision affecting eligibility or benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. The Department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness of that decision. BAM 600.

The 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 (Department) administers the MA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, et seq., and MCL 400.105. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program which provides financial assistance for disabled persons is established by 2004 PA 344. The Department of Human Services (Department) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, et seq., and MAC R 400.3151-400.3180. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

Pursuant to Federal Rule 42 CFR 435.540, the Department uses the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) policy in determining eligibility for disability under the Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance (SDA) programs. Under SSI, disability is defined as:

...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.

When determining disability, the federal regulations require that several considerations be analyzed in sequential order. These steps are:

1. Does the client perform Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)? If yes, the client is not disabled.
2. Does the client have a severe impairment that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more or result in death? If no, the client is not disabled.
3. Does the impairment appear on a special listing of impairments or are the client's symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings at least equivalent in severity to the set of medical findings specified for the listed impairment? If no, the analysis continues to Step 4.
4. Can the client do the former work that he performed within the last 15 years? If yes, the client is not disabled.
5. Does the client have the Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) to perform other work according to the guidelines set forth at 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Sections 200.00-204.00? If yes, client is not disabled.

At step one, the undersigned must determine whether the Claimant is engaging in substantial gainful activity (20 CFR 404.1520(b) and 416.920(b)). Substantial gainful activity (SGA) is defined as work activity that is both substantial and gainful. "Substantial work activity" is work activity that involves doing significant physical or mental activities (20 CFR 404.1572(a) and 416.972(a)). "Gainful work activity" is work that is usually done for pay or profit, whether or not a profit is realized (20 CFR 404.1572(b) and 416.972(b)). Generally, if an individual has earnings from employment or self-employment above a specific level set out in the regulations, it is presumed that he has demonstrated the ability to engage in SGA (20 CFR 404.1574, 404.1575, 416.974, and 416.975). If an individual engages in SGA, he is not disabled regardless of how severe his physical or mental impairments are and regardless of his age, education, and work experience. If the individual is not engaging in SGA, the analysis proceeds to the second step.

At step two, the undersigned must determine whether the Claimant has a medically determinable impairment that is "severe" or a combination of impairments that is "severe" (20 CFR 404.1520(c) and 416.920(c)). An impairment or combination of impairments is "severe" within the meaning of the regulations if it significantly limits an individual's ability to perform basic work activities. An impairment or combination of impairments is "not severe" when medical and other evidence establish only a slight abnormality or a combination of slight abnormalities that would have no more than a minimal effect on an individual's ability to work (20 CFR 404.1521 and 416.921). If the Claimant does not have a severe medically determinable impairment or combination of impairments, he is not disabled. If the Claimant has a severe impairment or combination of impairments, the analysis proceeds to the third step.

At step three, the undersigned must determine whether the Claimant's impairment or combination of impairments is of a severity to meet or medically equal the criteria of an impairment listed in 20 CFR Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 1 (20 CFR 404.1520(d), 404.1525, 404.1526, 416.920(d), 416.925, and 416.926). If the Claimant's impairment or combination of impairments is of a severity to meet or medically equal the criteria of a listing and meets the duration requirement (20 CFR 404.1509 and 416.909), the Claimant is disabled. If it does not, the analysis proceeds to the next step.

Before considering step four of the sequential evaluation process, the undersigned must first determine the Claimant's residual functional capacity (20 CFR 404.1520(e) and 416.920(c)). An individual's residual functional capacity is his ability to do physical and mental work activities on a sustained basis despite limitations from his impairments. In making this finding, the undersigned must consider all of the Claimant's impairments, including impairments that are not severe (20 CFR 404.1520(e), 404.1545, 416.920(e), and 416.945; SSR 96-8p).

Next, the undersigned must determine at step four whether the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform the requirements of his past relevant work (20 CFR 404.1520(f) and 416.920(f)). The term past relevant work means work performed (either as the Claimant actually performed it or as it is generally performed in the national economy) within the last 15 years or 15 years prior to the date that disability must be established. In addition, the work must have lasted long enough for the Claimant to learn to do the job and have been SGA (20 CFR 404.1560(b), 404.1565, 416.960(b), and 416.965). If the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to do his past relevant work, the Claimant is not disabled. If the Claimant is unable to do any past relevant work or does not have any past relevant work, the analysis proceeds to the fifth and last step.

At the last step of the sequential evaluation process (20 CFR 404.1520(g) and 416.920(g)), the undersigned must determine whether the Claimant is able to do any other work considering his residual functional capacity, age, education, and work experience. If the Claimant is able to do other work, he is not disabled. If the Claimant is not able to do other work and meets the duration requirement, he is disabled. Although the Claimant generally continues to have the burden of proving disability at this step, a limited burden of going forward with the evidence shifts to the Social Security

Administration. In order to support a finding that an individual is not disabled at this step, the Social Security Administration is responsible for providing evidence that demonstrates that other work exists in significant numbers in the national economy. This is work that the Claimant can do, given the residual functional capacity, age, education, and work experience (20 CFR 404.15 l2(g), 404.1560(c), 416.912(g) and 416.960(c)).

STEP 1

At Step 1, a determination is made on whether the Claimant is engaging in substantial gainful activity (20 CFR 416.920(b)). Substantial gainful activity is defined as work activity that is both substantial and gainful; and involves doing significant physical or mental activities. Gainful work activity is work activity that you do for pay or profit (20 CFR 416.972). If you are engaged in substantial gainful activity, you are not disabled regardless of how severe your physical or mental impairments are and regardless of your age, education, and work experience. Whether the Claimant is performing substantial gainful activity will be determined by federal regulations listed in 20 CFR 416.971 through 416.975.

The Claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity and is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

STEP 2

At Step 2, the Claimant has the burden of proof of establishing that he has a severely restrictive physical or mental impairment that has lasted or is expected to last for the duration of at least 12 months.

The Claimant is a 51-year-old man that is 5' 10" tall and weighs 207 pounds. The Claimant alleges disability due to back problems, right leg muscle weakness, and memory problems.

The objective medical evidence indicates the following:

The Claimant has a history of right side sciatica. On April 7, 2011, the Claimant underwent right L3-4 hemilaminectomy and disc excision for an acute herniated L3-4 disc with caudal extrusion. The Claimant underwent an L4-5 disc excision. The Claimant has a large right L3-4 herniated nucleus pulposus / extrusion with radiculopathy. The Claimant has been diagnosed with acute torticollis.

Medical reports indicate that physical therapy and injection therapy have nothing to offer the Claimant.

The Claimant has an antalgic gait and is capable of heel toe walking.

The Claimant's chest was found to be normal and without any pulmonary embolism.

The Claimant was diagnosed with hypertension not currently requiring medication as of April 8, 2011.

The Claimant is capable of walking at least a quarter mile, standing up to 60 minutes, and sitting for up to 30 minutes without excessive discomfort. The Claimant is capable of lifting 15 pounds frequently despite his impairments. The Claimant is capable of preparing meals and performing nonimpact exercises twice each week.

This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant has established a severe physical impairment that meets the severity and duration standard for MA-P and SDA purposes.

STEP 3

At Step 3, the Claimant's impairments are evaluated to determine whether they fit the description of a Social Security Administration disability listing in 20 CFR Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 1. A Claimant that meets one of these listing that meets the duration requirements is considered to be disabled.

The Claimant's impairment failed to meet the listing for back problems (1.04 disorders of the spine) and right leg muscle weakness (1.04 disorders of the spine), because the objective medical evidence does not demonstrate nerve root compression resulting in motor loss, muscle atrophy, or sensory loss. The objective evidence does not demonstrate a diagnosis of spinal arachnoiditis. The objective evidence does not demonstrate that the Claimant is not capable of effective ambulation.

The Claimant's impairment failed to meet the listing for memory problems because the objective medical evidence does not demonstrate that the Claimant's condition fits the description of any listing in the federal code of regulations.

The medical evidence of the Claimant's condition does not give rise to a finding that he would meet a statutory listing in federal code of regulations 20 CFR Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 1.

STEP 4

At Step 4, the Claimant's residual functional capacity (RFC) is examined to determine if you are still able to perform work you have done in the past. Your RFC is your ability to do physical and mental work activities on a sustained basis despite limitations from your impairments. Your RFC is assessed using all the relevant evidence in the record. If you can still do your past relevant work you are not disabled under these standards.

After careful consideration of the entire record, the undersigned finds that the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform sedentary or light work as defined in 20 CFR 404.1567(b) and 416.967(b).

The Claimant has past relevant work experience receiving and dispatching freight where he was required to manage and unload freight, and lift objects weighing as much as 90 pounds.

The Claimant's prior work does not fit within the description of sedentary or light work.

There is no evidence upon which this Administrative Law Judge could base a finding that the Claimant is able to perform work in which he has engaged in, in the past.

STEP 5

At Step 5, the burden of proof shifts to the Department to establish that the Claimant has the Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) for Substantial Gainful Activity.

The residual functional capacity is what an individual can do despite limitations. All impairments will be considered in addition to ability to meet certain demands of jobs in the national economy. Physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements and other functions will be evaluated.... 20 CFR 416.945(a).

To determine the physical demands (exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, we classify jobs as sedentary, light, medium and heavy. These terms have the same meaning as they have in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, published by the Department of Labor... 20 CFR 416.967.

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

Light work. Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 10 pounds. Even though the weight lifted may be very little, a job is in this category when it requires a good deal of walking or standing, or when it involves sitting most of the time with some pushing and pulling of arm or leg controls.... 20 CFR 416.967(b).

The objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his prior employment and

that he is physically able to do light or sedentary tasks if demanded of him. The Claimant's activities of daily living do not appear to be very limited and he should be able to perform light or sedentary work even with his impairments for a period of 12 months. The Claimant's testimony as to his limitations indicates that he should be able to perform light or sedentary work.

The Claimant was able to answer all the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. The Claimant was oriented to time, person and place during the hearing.

The Claimant's complaints of pain, while profound and credible, are out of proportion to the objective medical evidence contained in the file as it relates to the Claimant's ability to perform work.

Claimant is 51-years-old, a person closely approaching advanced age, 50-54, with a high school education, and a history of unskilled work. Based on the objective medical evidence of record Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform sedentary work or light work, and Medical Assistance (MA) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) is denied using Vocational Rule 20 CFR 202.13 as a guide.

The Department's Program Eligibility Manual contains the following policy statements and instructions for caseworkers regarding the State Disability Assistance program: to receive State Disability Assistance, a person must be disabled, caring for a disabled person or age 65 or older. BEM 261. Because the Claimant does not meet the definition of disabled under the MA-P program and because the evidence of record does not establish that the Claimant is unable to work for a period exceeding 90 days, the Claimant does not meet the disability criteria for State Disability Assistance benefits either.

The Department has established by the necessary competent, material and substantial evidence on the record that it was acting in compliance with Department policy when it determined that the Claimant was not eligible to receive Medical Assistance and/or State Disability Assistance.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the Department has appropriately established on the record that it was acting in compliance with Department policy when it denied the Claimant's application for Medical Assistance, retroactive Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance benefits. The Claimant should be able to perform a wide range of light or sedentary work even with his impairments. The Department has established its case by a preponderance of the evidence.

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

/s/
Kevin Scully
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: May 22, 2012

Date Mailed: May 22, 2012

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 60 days of the filing of the original request.

The Claimant may appeal the Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the receipt 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.

KS/tb

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