

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg No.: 2012-18634
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: February 13, 2012
DHS MA Spec Process (98)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Colleen M. Mamelka

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 Monday, February 13, 2012. The Claimant appeared, along with [REDACTED] and testified. [REDACTED] of the Specialized Medicaid Processing Unit 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 benefits on March 31, 2011.
2. On September 20, 2011, the Medical Review Team ("MRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 1, pp. 8, 9)
3. On December 5, 2011, the Department notified the Claimant of the MRT determination. (Exhibit 1, pp. 4, 5)

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4. On December 13, 2011, the Department received the Claimant's timely written request for hearing. (Exhibit 1, p. 6)
5. On December 21, 2011, the State Hearing Review Team ("SHRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 3)
6. The Claimant alleged physical disabling impairments due to back, hip, and leg pain, knee pain, asthma, tongue cyst, and cognitive dysfunction.
7. The Claimant alleged mental disabling impairments due to depression and anxiety.
8. At the time of hearing, the Claimant was [REDACTED] years old with a [REDACTED] birth date; was 5'5" in height; and weighed approximately 120 pounds.
9. The Claimant is a high school graduate with an employment history in lawn care, at a factory, as a lifeguard, and at a billiards hall.
10. The Claimant's impairments have lasted, or are expected to last, continuously for a period of 12 months or longer.

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 and, 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 back, hip, and leg pain, knee pain, asthma, tongue cyst, cognitive dysfunction, depression, and anxiety. In support of his claim, some older records from as early as [REDACTED] were submitted which document treatment for hip pain status post left hip arthroscopy with debridement of labral tear, left knee pain, traumatic brain injury, right hip lesion, right hip arthroscopy, left ligament knee tear, left hip dislocation, and colitis.

On [REDACTED] the Claimant sought treatment for tongue swelling. A CT scan revealed a tongue abscess.

On [REDACTED] the Claimant sought treatment for left hip pain. X-rays revealed mild dysplasia with no arthritic degeneration. Labral repair and possible resection was recommended.

On [REDACTED] an MRI of the brain revealed 1-2 tiny foci of subcortical increased T2 signal possibly representing demyelinating change as seen in head trauma cases. Overall, the findings were nonspecific and foci was commonly seen in migraine patients.

On [REDACTED] the Claimant sought treatment for his asthma. The Claimant was treated and discharged with the diagnoses of asthma exacerbation secondary to medication noncompliance.

On [REDACTED] the Claimant sought treatment for memory loss. The neurological examination was unremarkable and the memory complaints were mild.

On [REDACTED] a neuropsychological evaluation was performed based on reported changes in memory and functioning status post motor vehicle accident. An MRI of the brain from May 2010, showed tiny foci of subcortical increased T2 signal. The Claimant's full scale IQ was 73 which likely represented a decline from previous levels. The Claimant was found to have significant depression and anxiety as well as having difficulties adjusting to the limitations and changes as a result of the motor vehicle accident. The diagnoses were cognitive disorder, depression, and anxiety. The Global Assessment Functioning ("GAF") was 37 to 41 and he was found unable to work.

On [REDACTED] the Claimant presented to the hospital with complaints of a sore throat. A CT showed a cyst in the floor of the mouth which contained both fluid and air pockets with slight swelling. The Claimant remained on IV antibiotics throughout his hospital stay. Surgical intervention was ruled out. The Claimant was discharged on [REDACTED] with the diagnoses of acute oral abscess, renal insufficiency secondary to dehydration, hyperglycemia, and history of asthma without exacerbation.

On [REDACTED] an x-ray revealed small sinus tract within the tongue.

On [REDACTED] a consultative examination was basically unremarkable finding the Claimant to ambulate without difficulty showing no signs of depression.

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 some medical evidence establishing that he does have some physical and mental limitations on his 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 physical and mental disabling impairments due to back, hip, and knee pain, asthma, tongue cyst, cognitive dysfunction, depression, and anxiety.

Listing 12.00 encompasses adult mental disorders. The evaluation of disability on the basis of mental disorders requires documentation of a medically determinable impairment(s) and consideration of the degree in which the impairment limits the

individual's ability to work, and whether these limitations have lasted or are expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. 12.00A. The existence of a medically determinable impairment(s) of the required duration must be established through medical evidence consisting of symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings, to include psychological test findings. 12.00B. The evaluation of disability on the basis of a mental disorder requires sufficient evidence to (1) establish the presence of a medically determinable mental impairment(s), (2) assess the degree of functional limitation the impairment(s) imposes, and (3) project the probable duration of the impairment(s). 12.00D. The evaluation of disability on the basis of mental disorders requires documentation of a medically determinable impairment(s) and consideration of the degree in which the impairment limits the individual's ability to work, and whether these limitations have lasted or are expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. 12.00A.

Listing 12.02 defines organic mental disorders which are psychological or behavioral abnormalities associated with a dysfunction of the brain. The history and physical examination are considered as well as the abnormal mental state and loss of previously acquired functional abilities. The required level of severity for these disorders is met when the requirements in both A and B are satisfied, or when the requirements in C are satisfied.

- A. Demonstration of a loss of specific cognitive abilities or affective changes and the medically documented persistence of at least one of the following:
 - 1. Disorientation to time and place; or
 - 2. Memory impairment, either short-term (inability to learn new information), intermediate, or long-term (inability to remember information that was known sometime in the past); or
 - 3. Perceptual or thinking disturbances (e.g., hallucinations, delusions); or
 - 4. Change in personality; or
 - 5. Disturbance in mood; or
 - 6. Emotional lability (e.g., explosive temper outbursts, sudden crying, etc.) and impairment in impulse control; or
 - 7. Loss of measured intellectual ability of at least 15 I.Q. points from premorbid levels or overall impairment index clearly within the

severely impaired range on neuropsychological testing, e.g., Luria-Nebraska, Halstead-Reitan, etc;

AND

B. Resulting in at least two of the following:

1. Marked restriction of 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 a chronic organic mental 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 a 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 objective findings show that since the [REDACTED] motor vehicle accident, the Claimant's personality has changed; his mood is disturbed; and there has likely been a loss of intellectual ability of at least 15 I.Q. points. Previously, the Claimant was an honor roll student and, now, his full scale IQ is 73. The record established marked limitations in social functioning, as well as marked difficulties in maintaining concentration, persistence, or pace. This is further supported by the Claimant's failed work attempt. Ultimately, it is found that the Claimant's impairments meet, or are the

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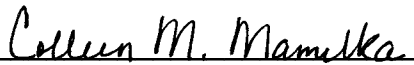
medical equivalent of, a listed impairment within 12.00, specifically, 12.02. Accordingly, the Claimant is found disabled at Step 3 with no further analysis required.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law finds the Claimant disabled for purposes of the MA-P benefit program.

Accordingly, It is ORDERED:

1. The Department's determination is REVERSED.
2. The Department shall initiate processing of the March 31, 2011 application to determine if all other non-medical criteria are met and inform the Claimant of the determination in accordance with Department policy.
3. The Department shall supplement for any lost benefits (if any) that the Claimant was entitled to receive if otherwise eligible and qualified in accordance with Department policy.
4. The Department shall review the Claimant's continued eligibility in accordance with Department policy in March 2013.



Colleen M. Mamelka
Administrative Law Judge
For Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: March 2, 2012

Date Mailed: March 2, 2012

NOTICE: Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS) 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. MAHS 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. (60 days for FAP cases)

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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.

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
Re consideration/Rehearing Request
P. O. Box 30639
Lansing, Michigan 48909-07322

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cc:

