

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

Reg. No: 2012-25812

Issue No: 2009

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: [REDACTED]

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9; and MCL 400.37 upon claimant's request for a hearing. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (DHS) properly deny claimant's Medical Assistance (MA) application?

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 [REDACTED], claimant applied for MA with the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS).
2. Claimant did not apply for retro MA.
3. On [REDACTED], the MRT denied.
4. On [REDACTED], the DHS issued notice.
5. On [REDACTED], claimant filed a hearing request.
6. On [REDACTED], the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) denied claimant. Pursuant to the claimant's request to hold the record open for the submission of new and additional medical documentation, on [REDACTED] SHRT issued a report indicating claimant was approved, but in the narrative indicated claimant was denied. On [REDACTED] SHRT issued an Amended Decision indicating Denial in the checkbox which was consistent with the narrative.

7. Claimant has received an SSI denial by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Claimant's decision was final and no appeal is pending.
8. As of the date of application, claimant was a [REDACTED] standing 6'1" tall and weighing 230 pounds. Claimant is classified as obese under the Body Mass Index (BMI) at 30.3.
9. Claimant testified he does not have an alcohol/drug abuse problem or history. Contrary medical indicates an Axis I diagnoses of 305.0-alcohol abuse. Claimant smokes and has a nicotine addiction.
10. Claimant has a driver's license and can drive an automobile.
11. Claimant has a high school diploma. Claimant testified that he was in special education for all subjects.
12. Claimant is not currently working. Claimant last worked approximately three years ago in production work. Claimant collected unemployment for two years. Claimant has also worked as a stock person for [REDACTED] and in a car wash. Claimant's work history is heavy, exertional and semi-skilled.
13. Claimant alleges disability on the basis of degenerative disk disease (DDD), depression, anxiety and alcohol abuse.
14. The [REDACTED] SHRT findings and conclusions of its decision are adopted and incorporated by reference herein/to the following extent:

Office visit: complains of neck and back pain. X-rays were normal of the cervical and lumbosacral views with the exception of some mild degenerative changes at C5-6, Exhibit 34. A psychiatric evaluation indicates alcohol abuse and depression with psychotic features. No difficulty sitting throughout evaluation; drinks approximately six beers per day to self-medicate. He did receive medications from treating source, but not taking. Analysis: claimant retains the capacity to perform to perform medium, exertional tasks of a simple and repetitive nature. Drug and alcohol abuse not material. Denied per 203.28.
15. The [REDACTED] SHRT decision is adopted and incorporated by reference herein/to the following extent:

...New medical...a letter submitted by Jacob Seng. Denied per 203.28 as a guide....New information does not significantly alter previous decision.

16. Claimant's psychiatric evaluation diagnoses claimant with alcohol abuse, major depressive disorder with psychotic features.
17. Testimony on the record indicates MRI's conclude mild degenerative changes.
18. Claimant testified that he has good and bad days. Claimant complains of chronic neck issues.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by Title XIX of the Social Security Act and is implemented by Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the MA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MCL 400.105. Department policies are found in the Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

In order to receive MA benefits based upon disability or blindness, claimant must be disabled or blind as defined in Title XVI of the Social Security Act (20 CFR 416.901). DHS, being authorized to make such disability determinations, utilizes the SSI definition of disability when making medical decisions on MA applications. MA-P (disability), also is known as Medicaid, which is a program designated to help public assistance claimants pay their medical expenses. Michigan administers the federal Medicaid program. In assessing eligibility, Michigan utilizes the federal regulations.

Relevant federal guidelines provide in pertinent part:

"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.

The federal regulations require that several considerations be analyzed in sequential order:

...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.

The regulations require that if disability can be ruled out at any step, analysis of the next step is not required. These steps are:

1. 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). If no, the analysis continues to Step 2.
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 ineligible for MA. If yes, the analysis continues to Step 3. 20 CFR 416.909(c).
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 that meets the duration requirement? If no, the analysis continues to Step 4. If yes, MA is approved. 20 CFR 416.920(d).
4. Can the client do the former work that he/she performed within the last 15 years? If yes, the client is ineligible for MA. If no, the analysis continues to Step 5. Sections 200.00-204.00(f)?
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? This step considers the residual functional capacity, age, education, and past work experience to see if the client can do other work. If yes, the analysis ends and the client is ineligible for MA. If no, MA is approved. 20 CFR 416.920(g).

At application claimant has the burden of proof pursuant to:

...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).

Federal regulations are very specific regarding the type of medical evidence required by claimant to establish statutory disability. The regulations essentially require laboratory or

clinical medical reports that corroborate claimant's claims or claimant's physicians' statements regarding disability. These regulations state in part:

...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 sure, X-rays);
- (4) Diagnosis (statement of disease or injury based on its signs and symptoms).... 20 CFR 416.913(b).

...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).

...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 a 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).

It is noted that Congress removed obesity from the Listing of Impairments shortly after the removal of drug addiction and alcoholism. This removal reflects the view that there is a strong behavioral component to obesity. Thus, obesity in-and-of itself is not sufficient to show statutory disability.

Applying the sequential analysis herein, claimant is not ineligible at the first step as claimant is not currently working. 20 CFR 416.920(b). The analysis continues.

The second step of the analysis looks at a two-fold assessment of duration and severity. 20 CFR 416.920(c). This second step is a *de minimus* standard. Ruling any ambiguities in claimant's favor, this Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) finds that claimant meets both. The analysis continues.

The third step of the analysis looks at whether an individual meets or equals one of the Listings of Impairments. 20 CFR 416.920(d). Claimant does not. The analysis continues.

Prior to any substantive review, jurisdiction is paramount. Pursuant to the considerations and law found at 42 CFR 431, where an individual receives a final determination by SSA, that determination is binding on the state agency within a certain time limit and if none of the exceptions apply.

The undersigned ALJ has reviewed the law as it applies to the facts in this case. As claimant received a final determination on his SSI application with SSA, as claimant did not appeal, as there is no appeal pending and it is within the time limit, this ALJ does not find that there is proper jurisdiction.

In the alternative, the sequential analysis will be applied.

The fourth step of the analysis looks at the ability of the applicant to return to past relevant work. This step examines the physical and mental demands of the work done by claimant in the past. 20 CFR 416.920(f).

In this case, this ALJ finds that claimant cannot return to past relevant work on the basis of the medical evidence. The analysis continues.

The fifth and final step of the analysis applies the biographical data of the applicant to the Medical Vocational Grids to determine the residual functional capacity of the applicant to do other work. 20 CFR 416.920(g). After a careful review of the credible and substantial evidence on the whole record, this Administrative Law Judge concurs with the SHRT conclusion that the evidence does not show statutory disability on the basis of Medical Vocational Rule Grid Rule 203.28 as a guide.

The 6th Circuit has held that subjective complaints are inadequate to establish disability when the objective evidence fails to establish the existence of severity of the alleged pain. *McCormick v Secretary of Health and Human Services*, 861 F2d 998, 1003 (6th cir 1988).

Claimant has the burden of proof from Step 1 to Step 4. 20CFR 416.912(c). Federal and state law is quite specific with regards to the type of evidence sufficient to show statutory disability. 20 CFR 416.913. This authority requires sufficient medical evidence to substantiate and corroborate statutory disability as it is defined under federal and state law. 20 CFR 416.913(b), .913(d), and .913(e); BEM 260. These medical findings must be corroborated by medical tests, labs, and other corroborating medical evidence that substantiates disability. 20 CFR 416.927, .928. Moreover, complaints and symptoms of pain must be corroborated pursuant to 20 CFR 416.929(a), .929(c)(4), and .945(e). Claimant's medical evidence in this case, taken as a whole, simply does not rise to statutory disability by meeting these federal and state requirements. 20 CFR 416.920; BEM 260, 261.

It is noted that claimant's obesity can be treated with diet and exercise. As already noted, obesity is not recognized as statutorily disabling.

It is further noted that claimant does have some degenerative changes pursuant to the radiology reports. However, degenerative changes are generally considered normal aging absent as showing of statutory disability which would require showing that those degenerative changes interfere with an individual's ability to engage in work or work-like settings. None is shown.

It is also noted that claimant's complaints are not supported by the great bulk of the medical evidence and thus, cannot be given substantial weight pursuant to the considerations at 20 CFR 416.920.

For these reasons and for the reasons stated above statutory disability is not shown.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department's actions were **CORRECT**. Accordingly, the department's determination in this matter is **UPHELD**.

/s/

Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: _____

Date Mailed: _____

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 mailing date of the rehearing decision.

JGS/jk

cc: _____

MAHS