

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2012-45955  
Issue No.: 2009  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: June 26, 2012  
County: Kalamazoo

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Vicki L. Armstrong

**HEARING DECISION**

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge upon Claimant's request for a hearing made pursuant to Michigan Compiled Laws 400.9 and 400.37, which govern the administrative hearing and appeal process. After due notice, an in-person hearing was commenced on June 26, 2012, in Kalamazoo County. Claimant, represented by [REDACTED], personally appeared and testified. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included Eligibility Specialist [REDACTED].

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 new evidence was forwarded to the State Hearing Review Team ("SHRT") for consideration. On October 8, 2012, the SHRT found Claimant was not disabled. This matter is now before the undersigned for a final decision.

**ISSUE**

Whether the Department of Human Services (the department) properly denied Claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P) and Retro-MA benefits?

**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 August 3, 2011, Claimant applied for MA-P and Retro-MA.
- (2) On December 22, 2011, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied Claimant's MA application due to lack of duration. (Department Exhibit A, pages 23-24).

- (3) On January 11, 2012, the department caseworker sent Claimant notice that his application was denied.
- (4) On April 6, 2012, Claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
- (5) On May 29, 2012, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) upheld the denial of MA-P and Retro-MA indicating Claimant retains the capacity to perform light work. (Department Exhibit B, page 1).
- (6) Claimant alleges disability based on a history of degenerative disc disease, degenerative joint disease, spinal stenosis at L2-L5, osteodiscitis at L5-S1, hypertension, chronic back pain, bursitis, cardiac arrhythmias, asthma, right knee cellulitis, methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and bladder outlet obstruction due to benign prostatic hypertrophy.
- (7) On July 22, 2011, Claimant was admitted to the hospital with a diagnosis of lumbar osteodiscitis. He complained of back spasms, difficulty voiding and fever. The MRI revealed discitis-osteomyelitis at L5-S1 and degenerative disc disease from L2-L4 with multilevel moderate to severe central canal or neural foraminal narrowing. He was also hypertensive. He was placed in MRSA isolation. He is on the heart failure list. On August 2, 2011, he was continued on three IV antibiotics for pneumonia and MRSA. On August 3, 2011, he was started on a beta blocker for wide complex tachycardia. IVPB is continued for osteomyelitis/discitis with MRSA and possible pneumonia. On August 6, 2011, Claimant underwent the stress test which was negative for exercise-induced myocardial ischemia. However, the quantitative gated SPECT imaging was remarkable for moderate global left ventricular systolic dysfunction with a calculated ejection fraction of 36 percent. On August 7, 2011, Claimant was discharged with diagnoses of: (1) Osteodiscitis of L5-S1; (2) Degenerative joint disease of the spine with spinal stenosis; (3) Hypertension; (4) Cardiac arrhythmias including supraventricular tachycardia and possible ventricular tachycardia; (5) Bladder outlet obstruction due to benign prostatic hypertrophy; (6) MRSA bacteremia; (7) Hospital-acquired pneumonia and (8) Acute kidney injury. (Department Exhibit A, pp 51-61).
- (8) On August 17, 2011, Claimant followed up with his orthopedic surgeon after his hospitalization for MRSA, discitis/osteomyelitis from July 22, 2011 through August 7, 2011. Claimant had been feeling weak through his hospital stay and the weakness has continued. He reports occasional dizziness that he describes as though he is spinning. He also complained of nausea and diarrhea. He appeared to be in no acute distress, but

fatigued and somewhat unsteady on his feet. His kidney function was improving. He was scheduled for physical therapy for post-hospitalization debility. (Department Exhibit B, pp 2-4).

- (9) On February 12, 2012, Claimant was admitted to the hospital after being diagnosed with right knee cellulitis, uncontrolled hypertension and benign prostatic hypertrophy. Blood work, including a complete blood count and blood cultures were drawn and Vancomycin was started. Orthopedics made several attempts at aspirating the right knee joint with no success. A CT was performed which demonstrated no obvious joint effusion or joint involvement. On February 21, 2012, the erythema had spread and a pustule had formed just inferior to the patella. This was cultured and eventually grew MRSA. On February 22, 2012, the cellulitis and edema continued to worsen and Claimant was taken to the operating room for an incision and drainage with prepatellar bursectomy and wound culture and wound VAC placement. He then showed signs of improvement. However, on postoperative day 2, his knee became increasingly swollen and painful and he was taken back into the operating room with low wound VAC output. He had a repeat incision and drainage and a large hematoma was found and removed. On February 29, 2012, he was discharged with a diagnosis of right prepatellar MRSA bursitis and cellulitis, controlled hypertension and benign prostatic hypertrophy. At the time of discharge, his pain was controlled on oral medications and he was tolerating a general diet and was able to ambulate with a walker. (Claimant Exhibit A, pp 1-2).
- (10) Claimant is a 50 year old man whose birthday is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 6'9" tall and weighs 240 lbs. Claimant completed high school equivalent degree and last worked in 2010.
- (11) Claimant was appealing the denial for Social Security disability at the time of the hearing.

### **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 Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

Under the Medicaid (MA) program:

"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.

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 limitations in light of the objective medical evidence presented. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(94).

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). Pain or other symptoms may cause a limitation of function beyond that which can be determined on the basis of the anatomical, physiological or psychological abnormalities considered alone. 20 CFR 416.945(e).

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).

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 to make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is being alleged, 20 CFR 416.913. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.908 and 20 CFR 416.929. By the same token, a conclusory statement by a physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind is not sufficient without supporting medical evidence to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.929.

A set order is used to determine disability. Current work activity, severity of impairments, residual functional capacity, past work, age, or education and work experience is reviewed. If there is a finding that an individual is disabled or not disabled at any point in the review, there will be no further evaluation. 20 CFR 416.920.

If an individual is working and the work is substantial gainful activity, the individual is not disabled regardless of the medical condition, education and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(c).

If the impairment, or combination of impairments, do not significantly limit physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, it is not a severe impairment(s) and disability does not exist. Age, education and work experience will not be considered. 20 CFR 416.920.

Statements about pain or other symptoms do not alone establish disability. There must be medical signs and laboratory findings which demonstrate a medical impairment. 20 CFR 416.929(a).

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).

In determining disability under the law, the ability to work is measured. An individual's functional capacity for doing basic work activities is evaluated. If an individual has the ability to perform basic work activities without significant limitations, he or she is not considered disabled. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(iv). Basic work activities are 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).

Medical findings must allow a determination of (1) the nature and limiting effects of your impairment(s) for any period in question; (2) the probable duration of the impairment; and (3) the residual functional capacity to do work-related physical and mental activities. 20 CFR 416.913(d).

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 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 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). Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. If someone can do medium work, we determine that he or she can also do sedentary and light work. 20 CFR 416.967(c). Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. If someone can do heavy work, we determine that he or she can also do medium, light, and sedentary work. 20 CFR 416.967(d).

The Administrative Law Judge is responsible for making the determination or decision about whether the statutory definition of disability is met. The Administrative Law Judge reviews all medical findings and other evidence that support a medical source's statement of disability. 20 CFR 416.927(e).

When determining disability, the federal regulations require that several considerations be analyzed in sequential order. If disability can be ruled out at any step, analysis of the next step is not required. These steps are:

1. Does the client perform Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)? If yes, the client is ineligible for MA. If no, the analysis continues to Step 2. 20 CFR 416.920(b).

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 416.920(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? If no, the analysis continues to Step 4. If yes, MA is approved. 20 CFR 416.290(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. 20 CFR 416.920(e).
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, the analysis ends and the client is ineligible for MA. If no, MA is approved. 20 CFR 416.920(f).

Based on Finding of Fact #6-#10 above this Administrative Law Judge answers:

Step 1: No.

Step 2: Yes.

Step 3: Yes. Claimant has shown, by clear and convincing documentary evidence and credible testimony, his spinal impairments meet or equal Listing 1.04(A) and 1.04(C):

1.04 *Disorders of the Spine* (e.g., herniated nucleus pulposus, spinal arachnoiditis, spinal stenosis, osteoarthritis, degenerative disc disease, facet arthritis, vertebral fracture), resulting in compromise of a nerve root (including the cauda equine) or the spinal cord. With:

A. Evidence of nerve root compression characterized by neural-anatomic distribution of pain, limitation of motion of the spine, motor loss (atrophy with associated muscle weakness or muscle spasm) accompanied by sensory or reflex loss and, if there is involvement of the lower back, positive straight-leg raising tests (sitting and supine).

AND

C. Lumbar spinal stenosis resulting in pseudo-claudication, established by findings on a appropriate medically acceptable imaging, manifested by chronic nonradicular pain and weakness, and resulting in inability to ambulate effectively, as defined in 1.00B2b.

**DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the department erred in determining Claimant is not currently disabled for MA/Retro-MA eligibility purposes.

Accordingly, the department's decision is **REVERSED**, and it is ORDERED that:

1. The department shall process Claimant's August 3, 2011, MA/Retro-MA application, and shall award him all the benefits he may be entitled to receive, as long as he meets the remaining financial and non-financial eligibility factors.
2. The department shall review Claimant's medical condition for improvement in October, 2014, unless his Social Security Administration disability status is approved by that time.
3. The department shall obtain updated medical evidence from Claimant's treating physicians, physical therapists, pain clinic notes, etc. regarding his continued treatment, progress and prognosis at review.

It is SO ORDERED.

/s/

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

Date Signed: October 29, 2012

Date Mailed: October 29, 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 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.

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