STATE OF MICHIGAN MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF:	
	Reg No.: 2012-55776
	Issue No.: 2009
	Case No.:
	Hearing Date: September 5, 2012
	Macomb County DHS (12)

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 hearing was held in Clinton Townsh ip, Michigan on Wednes day, September 5, 2012. The and testified. The Claimant wa Claimant appeared, along wit h represented by of Inc. Participating on behalf of the Department of Human Services ("Department") was

ISSUE

Whether the Department proper ly 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 t he competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

- 1. The Claimant submitt ed an application for public assistance seeking MA-P benefits, retroactive to June 2011, on August 1, 2011.
- On February 14, 2012, the Medical Review Team ("MRT") found the Claimant not 2. disabled. (Exhibit 2, pp. 258, 259)
- 3. notified the Clai mant of the MRT On February 21, 2012, the Department determination.

- 4. On May 16, 2012, the Department rece ived the Claimant's written request for hearing.
- 5. On July 6, 2012, the State Hearing Review Team ("S HRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 2)
- 6. The Claimant alleged physical disabl ing impairments due to shoulder pain, back pain, arms/hands pain, hip pain notatus post fracture, thoracic outlet syndrome, peripheral vision constriction, hypertension, chest pain, atrial fibrillation, sleep apnea, and blood disorder (prothrombin mutation).
- 7. The Claimant alleged mental disable ing impairments due to mood disorder and anxiety.
- 8. At the time of hearing, the Claimant was 47 years old with an date; was 6'2" in height; and weighed 228 pounds.
- 9. The Claim ant has the equivalent of a high school education with some college and an employment history as a general laborer, in retail management, carpet installation, and cable installation.
- 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 Bridge's Administrative Manual ("BAM"), the Bridges Eligib ility 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 im pairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted or can be expect ed 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/prescri bed treatment, prognosis for recovery and/or medical assessment of ability to do work-related ac tivities or ability to reason and make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is alleged. 20 CFR 416.913. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to

establish disab ility. 20 CF R 416.908; 2 0 CFR 4 16.929(a). Similarly, conclusor y 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 has 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 cons ider an individual's current work activit y; 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 det ermine whether an individual can perform past relev ant work; and residual functional capacity along with vocational factors (i .e. age, education, and work experienc e) 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 to evaluate subsequent steps. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If a determination cannot be made that an individual is disable ed, 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 indi vidual'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 f unctional capacity is the most an indiv idual can do d espite the limitations based on all rele vant evidence. 20 CFR 416.945(a)(1). An individual's residual functional capacity ass essment is ev aluated at both steps four and five. 20 CFR 41 6.920(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 indiv idual has the responsibility to prove disability. 20 CFR 4 16.912(a). An impair ment or combi nation of impairments is not severe if it does not signific antly limit an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.921(a). The in dividual 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 41 6.920a(a). First, an indi vidual'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 whic h the impairment(s) interferes with an tion independently, appropriately, effectively, and on individual's ability to func а Id.; 20 CFR 416.920a(c)(2). Chronic m ental disorders, structured sustained basis. 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 f unctioning; concentration, persistence or pace; and episodes of decompensat ion) are consider ed when deter mining 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 limit ation in the fourth functional area. last point on each scale repr esents a degree of limitation t hat 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 CF R 416.920a(d)(2). If the severe mental im pairment does not meet (or equal) a listed impairment, an individual's residual functional capacity is assessed. 20 CF R 416.920a(d)(3).

As outlined above, the first step looks at the i ndividual's current work activity. In the record presented, the Cla imant is not involved in substantial gainful activity therefore is not ineligible for disability benefits under Step 1.

The severity of the Claimant's alleged impa irment(s) is considered under St ep 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 purpos es, the impairment must be seevere. 20 CFR 416. 920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 416.920(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 416.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 416.920(c). Basic work activities means the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. 20 CFR 416.921(b). Examples include:

- 1. Physical functions such as wa lking, 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.

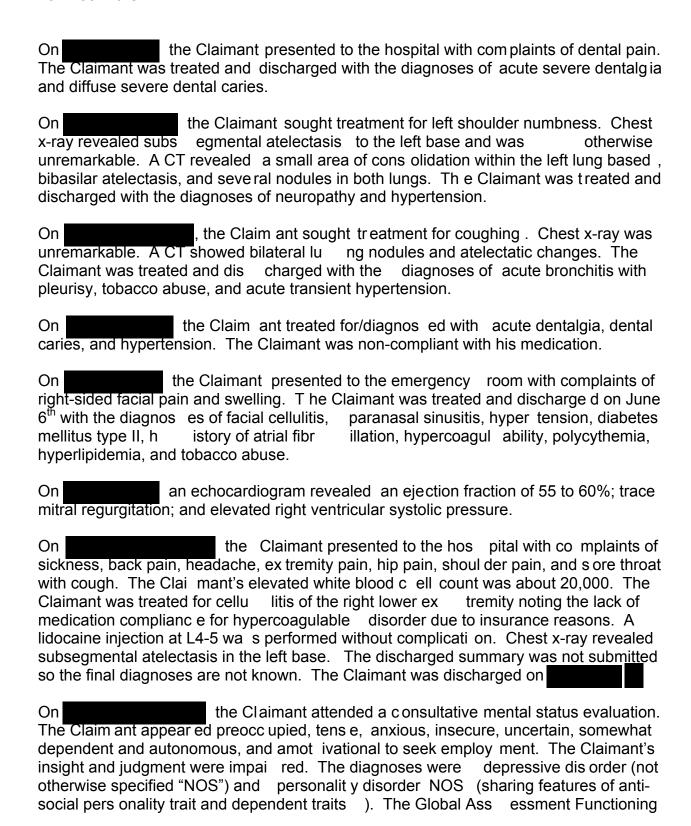
ld.

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 admin istrative 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 Claima nt alleges disability due to shou Ider pain, back pain, arms/hands pain, hip pain status post fractu re, thoracic outlet syndrome, peripheral vision constriction, hypertension, chest pain, atrial fibrillation, sleep ap nea, blood disorder (prothrombin mutation), anxiety, and mood disorder.

In support of his claim, a Medical Needs form was completed on behalf of the Claimant. The diagnoses were thoracic outlet syndrome, atrial fibrillation, anxiety, depression, hypertension, and hypercholest erolemia. The Claimant required a ssistance with meal preparation, shopping, laundry, and housework. The Claimant was found unable to work. The Claimant last saw this provider in August of 2008.

On the Claimant presented to the hospital with complaint s of chest pain. The Claimant was admitted with the diagnoses of c hest pain with possible acute coronary syndrome, subtherapeutic INR, and noncompliance with medication treatment. A stress test was unremarkable. An echocar diagram showed mildly dilated right and left atrium; trace mitral and tricuspid regurgit ation; and mildly dilated aortic root. The Claimant left the following day against medical advice.



("GAF") was 40 with a fair to guarded prognos is. Associated symptoms were poor self-esteem, anhedonia, lack of interest and motivation, poor attentiveness, and poor ability to focus.

On this same date, a consultative physical evaluation was performed. The examination revealed crepitus in both knees, decreased dor sal and palmar flexion in the right wrist, and tenderness over the right trochanter. The impressions were abnormal vision (slight decrease in visual acuity of the left eye), diabetes mellitus, hypertension, thoracic outlet syndrome with good peripheral pulses in both upper extremities, ri ght wrist arthralgia, back pain, hip pa in, knee pain, prothrombin mutation, and atrial fibrillation. Limitation s were listed as decreased right wrist movement.

On January 11, 2012, a letter was written on behalf of the Claimant confirm marked visual field loss in both eye along with marked contraction in both eyes.

On a vision examination revealed marked visual fields bilaterally with a diagnosis of unspecified visual disturbance bilaterally.

As previously noted, the Claim ant 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 deminimus effect on the Claimant's basic work activities. Further, the impairmentshave lasted continuous ly for twelve months; therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receipt of MA-P benefits under Step 2.

In the third step of the seque ntial an alysis of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the Claimant's impairment, or co mbination of impairm ents, is listed in Appendix 1 of Sub part P of 20 CF R, Part 404. The evidenc e confirms treatment/diagnoses (since 2011) of acute dentalgia, dental caries, hypertension, acut e bronchitis with pleurisy, tobacco abuse, facial cellulitis, sinusitis, diabetes mellitus, atrial fibrillation, hypercoa gulability, polycythemia , hyperlipidemia, depressive disorder, personality disorder, thoracic spine outlet, right wrist arthralgia, back pain, hip pain , knee pain, prothrombin mutation, and bilateral visual disturbance.

Listing 1.00 (musculoskeletal system), Listing 2.00 (special senses and speech), Listing 3.00 (respiratory system), Listing 4.00 (c ardiovascular system), Listing 7.00 (hematological disorders), and Listing 12.00 (mental disorders) were considered in light of the objective medical evidence. There were no objective findings of major joint dysfunction, soft tissue injury, fracture, or nerve root impingement; persistent, recurrent, and/or uncontrolled (while on prescribed treat ment) cardiovascular impairment; or end organ damage resulting from the Claimant's hypertension. There was no evidence to

meet the intent and severity requirement necessary to meet a visual disorder or hematological disorder. The evidence does not show that the Claimant's symptoms persist despite prescribed treatment or that the Claimant has very serious limitations in his ab ility to independently initiate, sustain, or complete activities of daily living. Mentally, there was no evidence of any marked limitations in any of the any functional area albeit with a GAF of 40. Although the objective medical records establish some physical and mental impairments, these records do not meet the intent and severity requirements of a listing, or its equivalent. Accordingly, the Claimant cannot be found disabled, or not disabled at Step 3; therefore, the Claimant's e ligibility is considered under Step 4. 20 CFR 416.905(a).

Before considering the fourth step in t he sequential analys is, a determination of the individual's residual functional capacity ("RFC") is made. 20 CFR 416.945. An individual's RFC is the most he/she can still do on a sustained bas is despite the limitations from the impairment(s). *Id.* The total limiting effects of all the impairments, to include those that are not severe, are considered. 20 CFR 416.945(e).

To determine the physical demands (exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, jobs are c lassified as sedentary, light, medium, hea vy, and very heavy. 2 0 CFR 416.967. Sedentary work involves lifting of no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. 20 CFR 416.967(a). 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. Id. Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are r equired occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. Light work involves li fting no more than 20 pounds at a frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing up to 10 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(b). Even though 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 invo lves sit ting most of the time with some pushing and pulling of arm or leg controls. Id. To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, an individual must have the ability to do substantially all of thes e activities. Id. A n individual capab le of light work is also capable of sedentary work, unless there are additionally limiting factors such as loss of fin е dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. *Id*. Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(c). An individual capable of performing medium work is also capable of light and sedentary work. *Id.* Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of object is weighing up to 50 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(d). A n individual capable of heavy work is also c apable of medium, light, and sedentary work. *Id.* Finally, very heavy work involves lifting objects with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing more than 100 pounds at a time weighing 50 pounds or more. 20 CFR 416.967(e). An individual capable of very heavy work is able to perform work under all categories. Id.

Limitations or restrictions which affect the ability to meet the demands of jobs other than strength demands (exertional requirements, i.e. sitting, standing, walk ing, lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling) are consider ed nonexertional. 20 CFR 416.969a(a). In considering whether an individual can perform past relevant work, a comparis on of the individual's residual functional c apacity with the demands of past relevant work. an individual can no longer do past relevant work the same residual functional capacity assessment along with an individual's a ge, education, and work experience is considered to determine whether an individual can adjust to other work which exists in the national economy. *Id.* Examples of non-exertional limitations or restrictions include difficulty to function due to nervousness, anxiousness, or depression; difficulty maintaining attention or concentration; difficulty understanding or remembering detailed instructions; difficulty in seeing or hearing; difficulty tolerating so me physical feature(s) of certain work settings (i.e. ca n't tolerate dust or fumes); or di fficulty performing the manipulative or postur al functions of some work such as reaching, handling, stooping, climbing, crawling, or crouching. 20 CFR 4 16.969a(c)(1)(i) – (vi). If the imp airment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, only affect the ability to perform the non-exertional aspects of work-related activities, the rules in Appendix 2 do not direct factual conclusions of disabled or not disabled. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(2). The determination of whether disability exists is bas ed upon the principles in the appropriate sections of the regulations, giving consideration to the rules for specific case situations in Appendix 2. ld.

In this case, the evidence confirms treatment/diagnoses (since 2011) of acute dentalgia, dental caries, hypertension, ac ute bronchiti s with pleurisy, tobacco abuse, facial cellulitis, sinusitis, dia betes mellitus, atri al fibrillation, h ypercoagulability, poly cythemia, hyperlipidemia, depressive disor der, personalit y disor der, thoracic spine outlet, right wrist arthralgia, back pain, hip pain, knee pain, prothrombin mutation, and bilateral visual disturbance. The Claim ant testifi ed that he is able to walk 1 to 1½ hours; grip/grasp without issue; sit for less than 2 hours; lift/carry approximately 10 pounds with pain on the right; stand for about 20 minutes ; and is able to bend an d/or squat. The objective medical ev idence does not cont ain specific limitations. After review of the entire record and considering the Claimant's testimony, it is found, at this point, that the Claimant is unable to meet the demands required to perform sed entary work as defined by 20 CFR 416.967(a).

The fourth step in analyzing a dis ability claim requires an assessment of the Claimant's residual f unctional capacity ("RFC") and pas—t relevant em—ployment. 20 CF—R 416.920(a)(4)(iv). An individual is not disabled if he/she can perform past relevant work. *Id.*; 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3). Past relevant work is work that has been performed within the past 15 years that was a substantial gainful activity and that lasted long enough for the individual to lear n the position. 20 CF R 416.960(b)(1). Vocational fact ors of age, education, and work experience, and whether the past relevant employment exists in significant numbers in the national economy is not considered. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3).

The Claim ant's prior employment was as a general laborer, in retail management, carpet installation, and cable installation. In cons ideration of the Claimant's testimony and Occupational Code, the prior employment as a general lab orer and retail manager is considered semi-skilled medium work while his employment in carpet and cable installation is classified as semi-skilled heavy work. If the impairment or combination of impairments does not limit physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, it is not a severe impairment(s) and disability does not exist. 20 CFR 416.920. As noted above, the objective evidence does not contain any physical or mental r estrictions that would preclude all employment. In light of the entire record and the Cla imant's RFC (see above), it is found that the Claimant is unable to perform past relevant work. Accordingly, the Claimant cannot be found disabled, or not disabled, at Step 4.

In Step 5, an asses sment of the Claimant's residual functional capacity and age, education, and work experience is consider ed to determine whet her an adjustment to other work can be made. 20 CFR 416.920(4)(v). At the time of hearing, the Claimant was 47 years old and, thus, considered to be a younger individual for MA-P purposes. The Claimant has the equivalent of a high school education with some current college. Disability is found if an individual is unable to adjust to other work. *Id.* At this point in the analysis, the burden shifts from the Claimant to the Department to present proof that the Claimant has the residual c apacity to s ubstantial gainful employment. 20 CFR 416.960(2); Richardson v Sec of Health and Human Services, 735 F2d 962, 964 (CA 6, 1984). While a voc ational expert is not required, a finding supported by substantial evidence that the individual has the vocational qualifications to perform specific jobs is needed to meet the burden. O'Banner v Sec of Healt h and Human Services, 587 F2d 321, 323 (CA 6, 1978). Medical-Vocationa I quidelines found at 20 CFR Subpart P. Appendix II, may be used to satisfy the burden of proving that the individual can perform specific jobs in the national economy. Heckler v Campbell, 461 US 458, 467 (1983); Kirk v Secretary, 667 F2d 524, 529 (CA 6, 1981) cert den 461 US 957 (1983). The ag e for younger individuals (under 50) generally will not seriously affect the ability to adjust to other work. 20 CFR 416.963(c).

In this case, the objective evidence confirms treatment/diagnoses (since 2011) of acute dentalgia, dental caries, hypertension, ac ute bronchitis with pleurisy, tobacco abus e, facial ce Ilulitis, sin usitis, diab etes melli tus, atrial fibrillatio n, hypercoagulability, polycythemia, hyperlipidemia, depressive disor der, personality dis order, thoracic spine outlet, right wrist arthralgia, back pain, hip pain, knee pain, prothrombin mutation, and bilateral visual disturbance. The Claimant testified that he was able to perform physical activity comparable to sedentary activity with some limitations. T hat being stated, the evidence establishes that mentally, the Claimant is preoccupi ed, tens e, anxious, insecure, uncertain, somewhat dependent, along with poor self-esteem, lack of interes t and motivation, poor attentiveness, poor ability to focus, with a GAF of 40. A GAF of 40 means some impairment in reality testing or communication or major impairment in

several areas, such as work or school, fam ily relations, judgment, thinking, or mood. Further, the evidence reveals marked visual field loss bilaterally along with marked contraction in both eyes. In consideration of the combination of physical and mental impairments, it is found that at this point, the Claimant lacks the physical and mental capabilities to perform even sedentary work as defined in 20 CFR 416.967(a). In light of the foregoing, it is found that the Claimant is disabled for purposes of the MA-P at Step 5.

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 processi ng of the August 1, 2011 application, retroactive to June 2011, 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 lost benefits (if any) that the Claimant was entitled to receive if otherwise eligib le and qualifie d in accordance with Department policy.
- 4. The Department shall review the Claimant's continued eligibility in accordance with Department policy in October 2013.

Colleen M. Mamulta

Colleen M. Mamelka

Administrative Law Judge

For Maura Corrigan, Director

Department of Human Services

Date Signed: September 27, 2012

Date Mailed: September 27, 2012

NOTICE: Michigan Administrative Hearing Syst em (MAHS) may order a rehearing or reconsideration on either its own motion or at the request of a par ty within 30 days of the mailing date of this Dec ision and Order. MAHS will not order a rehearing or reconsideration on the Department's mo tion where the final decis ion cannot be implemented within 90 days of the filing of the original request. (60 days for FAP cases)

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 <u>MAY</u> 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

CMM/cl

CC:

Macomb County DHS (12)/DHS-1843