

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2012-57805  
Issue No.: 2009, 4031  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: October 29, 2012  
County: Sanilac

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Susan C. Burke**

**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, a hearing was commenced on October 29, 2012, in Sandusky, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included Claimant, Claimant's spouse, Heather Lage, and Claimant's Authorized Hearing Representative, [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED], ES.

During the hearing, Claimant waived the time period for the issuance of this decision in order to allow for the submission of additional medical records. The evidence was received, reviewed, and forwarded to the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) for consideration. On December 27, 2012, this office received the SHRT determination which found Claimant not disabled. This matter is now before the undersigned for a final decision

**ISSUE**

Whether the Department properly determined that Claimant was not disabled for purposes of the Medical Assistance (MA-P) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefit programs.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

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

1. Claimant submitted an application for public assistance seeking MA-P, Retroactive MA-P, and SDA benefits on March 6, 2012.
2. On May 8, 2012, the Medical Review Team (MRT) determined that Claimant was not disabled.
3. The Department notified Claimant of the MRT determination on May 25, 2012.
4. On June 5, 2012, the Department received Claimant's timely written request for hearing.
5. On July 18, 2012, SHRT found Claimant not disabled.
6. During the hearing, Claimant waived the time period for the issuance of this decision in order to allow for the submission of additional medical records. The evidence was received, reviewed, and forwarded to SHRT for consideration. On December 27, 2012, this office received the SHRT determination which found Claimant not disabled.
7. At the time of the hearing, the Claimant was [REDACTED] years old, with a birth date of [REDACTED], [REDACTED].
8. Claimant has a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education.
9. Claimant is not currently working.
10. Claimant has a work history as a truck driver and farm worker.
11. Claimant suffers from stenosis of the left lateral recess, compressing the traversing left L5 nerve root, L-5 S1 disc protrusion, bilateral L5 and left S1 radiculopathy and peripheral sensory polyneuropathy. (Exhibits A-53, 54, B-2) This condition stemmed from Claimant falling on the ice in January of 2012. (Exhibit B-1)
12. Claimant's impairments have lasted, or are expected to last, continuously for a period of twelve months or longer.
13. Claimant's complaints and allegations concerning his impairments and limitations, when considered in light of all objective medical evidence, as well as the record as a whole, reflect an individual who is so impaired as to be incapable of engaging in any substantial gainful activity on a regular and continuing basis.

### **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”).

Federal regulations require that the Department use the same operative definition for “disabled” as used for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. 42 CFR 435.540(a).

“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.

In determining whether an individual is disabled, 20 CFR 416.920 requires the trier of fact to follow a sequential evaluation process by which current work activity, the severity of the impairment(s), statutory listings of medical impairments, residual functional capacity, and vocational factors (i.e., age, education, and work experience) are assessed in that order. When a determination that an individual is or is not disabled can be made at any step in the sequential evaluation, evaluation under a subsequent step is not necessary.

First, the trier of fact must determine if the individual is working and if the work is substantial gainful activity. (SGA) 20 CFR 416.920(b).

In this case, Claimant is not currently working. Claimant testified credibly that he is not currently working and the Department presented no contradictory evidence. Therefore, Claimant is not disqualified for MA at this step in the sequential evaluation process.

Second, in order to be considered disabled for purposes of MA, a person must have a severe impairment. 20 CFR 416.920(c). A severe impairment is an impairment expected to last twelve months or more (or result in death) which significantly limits an individual’s physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities. The term “basic work activities” means 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).

The purpose of the second step in the sequential evaluation process is to screen out claims lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v. Bowen* 880 F2d 860, 862 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir, 1988). As a result, the Department may only screen out claims at this level which are “totally groundless” solely from a medical standpoint. The *Higgs* court used the severity requirement as a “*de minimus* hurdle” in the disability determination. The *de minimus* standard is a provision of a law that allows the court to disregard trifling matters.

In this case, medical evidence has clearly established that Claimant has an impairment (or combination of impairments) that has more than a minimal effect on Claimant’s work activities. Claimant was diagnosed with stenosis of the left lateral recess, compressing the traversing left L5 nerve root, L-5-S1 disc protrusion bilateral L5 and left S1 radiculopathy and peripheral sensory polyneuropathy. (Exhibits A-53, 54, B-2) This condition stemmed from Claimant falling on the ice in January of 2012. (Exhibit B-1)

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, meets or medically equals the criteria of an impairment listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. (20 CFR 416.920 (d), 416.925, and 416.926.) This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant’s medical record will support a finding that Claimant’s impairment(s) is a “listed impairment” or is medically equal to a listed impairment. See Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404, Part A.

In the present case, Claimant alleged disability due to bulging disc and back pain. (Exhibit A3)

Listing 1.00 defines musculoskeletal system impairments. Disorders of the musculoskeletal system may result from hereditary, congenital, or acquired pathologic

processes. 1.00A Impairments may result from infectious, inflammatory, or degenerative processes, traumatic or developmental events, or neoplastic, vascular, or toxic/metabolic diseases. 1.00A Regardless of the cause(s) of a musculoskeletal impairment, functional loss for purposes of these listings is defined as the inability to ambulate effectively on a sustained basis for any reason, including pain associated with the underlying musculoskeletal impairment, or the inability to perform fine and gross movements effectively on a sustained basis for any reason, including pain associated with the underlying musculoskeletal impairment. Inability to ambulate effectively means an extreme limitation of the ability to walk; i.e., an impairment(s) that interferes very seriously with the individual's ability to independently initiate, sustain, or complete activities. 1.00B2b(1) Ineffective ambulation is defined generally as having insufficient lower extremity function to permit independent ambulation without the use of a hand-held assistive device(s) that limits the functioning of both upper extremities. (Listing 1.05C is an exception to this general definition because the individual has the use of only one upper extremity due to amputation of a hand.) *Id.* To ambulate effectively, individuals must be capable of sustaining a reasonable walking pace over a sufficient distance to be able to carry out activities of daily living. 1.00B2b(2) They must have the ability to travel without companion assistance to and from a place of employment or school. . . . *Id.* When an individual's impairment involves a lower extremity uses a hand-held assistive device, such as a cane, crutch or walker, the medical basis for use of the device should be documented. 1.00J4 The requirement to use a hand-held assistive device may also impact an individual's functional capacity by virtue of the fact that one or both upper extremities are not available for such activities as lifting, carrying, pushing, and pulling. *Id.*

Categories of Musculoskeletal include:

\* \* \*

- 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 spinal cord. With:
- A. Evidence of nerve root compression characterized by neuro-anatomic distribution of pain, limitation of motion of the spine, motor loss (atrophy with associated muscle weakness or muscle weakness) accompanied by sensory or reflex loss and, if there is involvement of the lower back, positive straight-leg raising test (sitting and supine); or
  - B. Spinal arachnoiditis, confirmed by an operative note or pathology report of tissue biopsy, or by appropriate medically acceptable imaging, manifested by severe

burning or painful dysesthesia, resulting in the need for changes in position or posture more than once every 2 hours; or

- C. Lumbar spinal stenosis resulting in pseudoclaudication, established by findings on appropriate medically acceptable imaging, manifested by chronic nonradicular pain and weakness, and resulting in inability to ambulate effectively, as defined in 1.00B2b. (see above definition)

In this case, the objective evidence reveals stenosis and disc protrusion with nerve root compression/impingement (March 14, 2012, Exhibit A-53) and decreased sensation in the left lower extremity and left foot. (April 4, 2012) Based on the medical evidence alone, Claimant's impairment(s) meet, or are the medical equivalent thereof, a listing impairment within Listing 1.00, specifically 1.04 A. Accordingly, Claimant is found disabled at Step 3 with no further analysis required.

The State Disability Assistance program, which provides financial assistance for disabled persons, was established by 2004 PA 344. The Department administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10 *et seq.* and Mich Admin Code, Rules 400.3151 – 400.3180. Department policies are found in BAM, BEM, and BRM. A person is considered disabled for SDA purposes if the person has a physical or mental impairment which meets federal SSI disability standards for at least ninety days. Receipt of SSI or RSDI benefits based on disability or blindness, or the receipt of MA benefits based on disability or blindness automatically qualifies an individual as disabled for purposes of the SDA program.

In this case, Claimant is found disabled for purposes of the MA-P program; therefore, Claimant is found disabled for purposes of SDA benefit program.

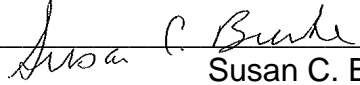
### **DECISION AND ORDER**

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 and SDA benefit programs as of January 1, 2012.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED:

1. The Department's determination is REVERSED.
2. The Department shall initiate processing of the March 6, 2012 application, to determine if all other non-medical criteria are met and inform Claimant of the determination in accordance with Department policy.

3. The Department shall supplement for any lost benefits that Claimant was entitled to receive, if otherwise eligible, in accordance with Department policy.
4. The Department shall review the Claimant's continued eligibility in February of 2014, in accordance with Department policy.

  
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Susan C. Burke  
Administrative Law Judge  
For Maura Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: January 14, 2013

Date Mailed: January 14, 2013

**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)

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.

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

SCB/hw

2012-57805/SCB

cc:

