

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2012 36292
Issue No.: 2009, 4031
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: May 3, 2012
Wayne County DHS (43)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Lynn M. Ferris

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 May 3, 2012. The Claimant appeared and testified. [REDACTED], ES, 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") 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. The Claimant submitted an application for public assistance seeking MA-P, and State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits on September 15, 2011.
2. On February 7, 2012, the Medical Review Team ("MRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 1, page 2 and 3).
3. The Department notified the Claimant of the MRT determination on February 13, 2012.

4. On February 23, 2012, the Department received the Claimant's timely written request for hearing. (Exhibit 1).
5. On April 5, 2012, the State Hearing Review Team ("SHRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 1, page 17).
6. An Interim Order was issued on May 4, 2012, accepting new evidence submitted at the hearing by the Claimant, as well as ordering a psychiatric consultative exam.
7. New evidence was received and sent to the State Hearing Review Team on June 13, 2012.
8. On July 20, 2012, the State Hearing Review Team ("SHRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 3).
9. The Claimant alleged mental disabling impairments of Bipolar Disorder, Schizoaffective Disorder and depression.
10. The Claimant has not alleged physical disabling impairment(s).
11. At the time of hearing, the Claimant was [REDACTED] years old, with a [REDACTED] birth date; the Claimant is currently [REDACTED] years of age. The Claimant's is 6'1" in height; and weighs 195 pounds.
12. The Claimant has the equivalent of a 10th grade education and also attended special education classes. The Claimant has an employment history working general labor unskilled jobs including digging holes, general maintenance, lawn maintenance, washing dishes and cleaning buildings.
13. The Claimant completed a drug rehabilitation program he was admitted to in February 2011.
14. The Claimant's impairments have lasted, or are expected to last, for 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 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 mental impairments of Bipolar Disorder, Schizoaffective Disorder and depression.

The Claimant was most recently evaluated in a psychiatric assessment by his treating psychiatrist conducted on [REDACTED]. The Diagnosis was Schizoaffective Disorder and the GAF score was 30. The identified problems were chronic mood

instability and psychotic symptoms, lack of job skills or job training abilities and lack of coping skills. The prognosis was “guarded to bleak given his inability ever to function independently and well, so the goal of doing that now is unlikely to be met. “

On [REDACTED] a Mental Residual Functional Capacity Assessment was performed by the Claimant’s treating psychiatrist. The examination found the Claimant markedly limited in 17 of the 20 categories and moderately limited in only 3 categories.

A consultative exam was conducted on [REDACTED] and the diagnosis was Bipolar Disorder II, depressed type with psychotic features. The GAF score was 40. The examiner noted low self esteem some psychomotor retardation was present and no tendency to exaggerate symptoms. Claimant was unable to name 5 large cities, current famous people and events or to perform multiplication. The Claimant was noted as unable to manage his funds. The report concludes that due to his psychosis with depression and mood ability, he is restricted to work that involves brief and superficial interactions with coworkers supervisors and the public. Prognosis was guarded. (Exhibit 1 page10).

An additional Mental Residual Functional Capacity Assessment was conducted on [REDACTED] by the Claimant’s then-therapist and evaluated the Claimant as markedly limited in 13 of the 20 categories. It also noted that Claimant had a learning disability and was not able to complete forms and remember past work. (Exhibit 1 pages 17 and 18).

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 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 mental disabling impairments due to Bipolar Disorder, Schizoaffective Disorder and depression.

Listing 12.04 defines affective disorders as being characterized by a disturbance of mood, accompanied by a full or partial manic or depressive syndrome. Generally, affective disorders involve either depression or elation. The required level of severity for these disorders is met when the requirements of both A and B are satisfied, or when the requirements in C are satisfied.

- A. Medically documented persistence, either continuous or intermittent, of one of the following:
1. Depressive syndrome characterized by at least four of the following:
 - a. Anhedonia or pervasive loss of interest in almost all activities; or
 - b. Appetite disturbance with change in weight; or
 - c. Sleep disturbance; or
 - d. Psychomotor agitation or retardation; or
 - e. Decreased energy; or
 - f. Feelings of guilt or worthlessness; or
 - g. Difficulty concentrating or thinking; or
 - h. Thoughts of suicide; or
 - i. Hallucinations, delusions, or paranoid thinking; or
 2. Manic syndrome characterized by at least three of the following:
 - a. Hyperactivity; or
 - b. Pressure of speech; or
 - c. Flight of ideas; or
 - d. Inflated self-esteem; or
 - e. Decreased need for sleep; or
 - f. Easy distractability; or
 - g. Involvement in activities that have a high probability of painful consequences which are not recognized; or
 - h. Hallucinations, delusions, or paranoid thinking; or
 3. Bipolar syndrome with a history of episodic periods manifested by the full symptomatic picture of both manic and depressive syndromes (and currently characterized by either or both syndromes)
- AND
- B. Resulting in at least two of the following:
1. Marked restriction on 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 chronic affective 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 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 record reveals current treatment for Bipolar Disorder, Schizoaffective Disorder and depression. Medical records documenting the Claimant's course of treatment clearly document that the Claimant's ability to function is severely limited due to his mental impairments, as supported by the treating psychiatrist and former therapist evaluations. The Claimant credibly testified to his inability to remember things, depression, hearing voices that tell him to do things that would be harmful to himself. The most recent GAF score was 30 and prior to that a GAG score of 40.

The medical records document persistence, either continuous or intermittent, of several aspects of 12.04 A(1), that the Claimant has appetite disturbance with change in weight, sleep disturbance, hallucinations, delusions or paranoid thinking. The Claimant also has a history of episodic periods manifested by full symptomatic picture of Bipolar Syndrome 12.04 A(3).

Lastly, the Claimant's Mental Residual Functional Capacity Assessment documented marked restrictions on activities of daily living, social functioning, maintaining concentration, persistence or pace, thus satisfying 12.04 B.

As a result, the records and testimony show that the Claimant has marked restrictions in daily living and social functioning and has a GAF score of 30. Ultimately, based on the medical evidence, the Claimant's impairment(s) meets, or is the medical equivalent of, a listed impairment within 12.00 (specifically 12.04). Accordingly, the Claimant is found disabled at Step 3 with no further analysis required. Additionally, it is determined that drug use was not material to the Claimant's mental disabling impairments.

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 Michigan Administrative Code Rules 400.3151 – 400.3180. Department policies are found in BAM, BEM, and RFT. A person is considered disabled for SDA purposes if the person has a physical or mental

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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, the Claimant is found disabled for purposes of the MA-P program; therefore, he 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.

Accordingly, It is ORDERED:

1. The Department's determination is REVERSED.
2. The Department shall initiate processing of the September 15, 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 in accordance with the September 15, 2011 application, if otherwise eligible and qualified in accordance with Department policy.
4. The Department shall review the Claimant's continued eligibility in August 2013 in accordance with Department policy.


Lynn M. Ferris
Administrative Law Judge
For Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: August 7, 2012

Date Mailed: August 7, 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).

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 to:

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

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cc:

