

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2012-37148
Issue No: 2009

[REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Suzanne L. Morris

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]. The claimant was represented by [REDACTED]. The claimant appeared by telephone and provided testimony. The department witness was [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 submitted a new application for MA covering the time period of [REDACTED] and ongoing with the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) .
2. Claimant applied for retro MA for [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
3. On [REDACTED], the MRT denied.
4. On [REDACTED], the DHS issued notice.

¹ This case evolved from a rehearing held on August 18, 2011, at which the department agreed to reprocess claimant's original MA application from February 17, 2006 with retro MA requested. The application initially did not get processed. Thus, the claimant/claimant's representative recreated the application and resubmitted it on September 19, 2011. However, the time period being considered in this decision is February 17, 2006 and ongoing with three retro months (November and December 2005 and January, 2006).

5. On [REDACTED]/claimant's representative filed a hearing request.
6. Claimant testified at the administrative hearing that she has an SSI application pending with the Social Security Administration (SSA).
7. On [REDACTED] the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) denied claimant.
8. As of the date of hearing, claimant was a [REDACTED] standing 5'0" tall and weighing 225 pounds. Claimant has a 10 grade education.
9. Claimant does not have a driver's license.
10. Claimant is not currently working. Claimant last worked in 2006 or 2007 as a grocery store owner.
11. Claimant alleges disability on the basis of diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis and obesity.
12. The claimant was admitted to the hospital on [REDACTED] with a severe headache and upper extremity weakness and numbness. A [REDACTED] MRI of the cervical spine found mild to moderate degenerative changes in the cervical spine including small C5 – 6 disk protrusion. On [REDACTED], a cerebral angiogram was conducted. No evidence of a cerebral aneurysm was found. A colonoscopy was unremarkable. The claimant was discharged on [REDACTED].
13. A [REDACTED] physician statement indicates the claimant's examination areas were all within normal limits (or deferred). The claimant was stable with no physical or mental limitations.
14. A [REDACTED] physician statement again found the claimant to be within normal limits on all examination areas (except those deferred). Claimant's blood pressure was 122/80. She was stable. She was limited to lifting/carrying frequently carrying 10 pounds and occasionally lifting/carrying 25 pounds. She could stand/walk six hours in an eight hour work day. She was not limited in using her hands/arms or feet/legs.

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

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).

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.

Before considering step four of the sequential evaluation process, the Administrative Law Judge must first determine the claimant's residual functional capacity. 20 CFR 404.1520(e) and 416.920(e). An individual's residual functional capacity is his/her ability to do physical and mental work activities on a sustained basis despite limitations from his/her impairments. In making this finding, all of the claimant's impairments, including impairments that are not severe, must be considered. 20 CFR 404.1520(e), 404.1545, 416.920(e), and 416.945; SSR 96-8.

The claimant was admitted to the hospital on [REDACTED] with a severe headache and upper extremity weakness and numbness. However, cerebral aneurysm was ruled out. A colonoscopy was unremarkable. The only condition found was mild to moderate degenerative changes in the cervical spine including small C5 – 6 disk protrusion. The claimant's treating physician indicated her examination areas were all normal and indicated her without physical and mental limitations on the first examination report and the second examination report only limited her to lifting/carrying 10 pounds frequently/25 pounds occasionally during a workday. The claimant's blood pressure was under control at examination. Her blood sugars were a little high, but she was on medication and did not appear to be reporting to the hospital or doctors for any side

effects from the diabetes. Thus, it would appear that the claimant would remain capable of at least light work, if not medium.

Next, the Administrative Law Judge must determine at step four whether the claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform the requirements of his/her past relevant work. 20 CFR 404.1520(f) and 416.920(f). The term past relevant work means work performed (either as the claimant actually performed it or as it is generally performed in the national economy) within the last 15 years or 15 years prior to the date that disability must be established. In addition, the work must have lasted long enough for the claimant to learn to do the job and have been SGA. 20 CFR 404.1560(b), 404.1565, 416.960(b), and 416.965. If the claimant has the residual functional capacity to do his/her past relevant work, the claimant is not disabled. If the claimant is unable to do any past relevant work or does not have any past relevant work, the analysis proceeds to the fifth and last step.

In this case, this ALJ finds that claimant can return to past relevant work on the basis of the medical evidence. The claimant's past relevant work was as a cashier for her family's grocery store. A cashier is classified as light work, according to the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. Thus, the claimant would retain the capacity to perform this work. Therefore, the claimant is disqualified at Step 4 of the analysis.

Claimant has submitted insufficient objective medical evidence that she lacked the residual functional capacity to perform at least light work if demanded of her. Therefore, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the objective medical evidence on the record does not establish that claimant had no residual functional capacity to perform her prior work. Claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 4 based upon the fact that she has not established by objective medical evidence that she could not perform at least light work.

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).

As noted above, claimant has the burden of proof pursuant to 20 CFR 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.

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/ _____
Suzanne L. Morris
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: [REDACTED]

Date Mailed: [REDACTED]

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.

SLM/jk

cc: [REDACTED]
MAHS