

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2012-46788  
Issue No: 2009; 4031

[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 appeared and provided testimony, along with her husband, [REDACTED]. The department witness was [REDACTED].

**ISSUE**

Did the Department of Human Services (DHS) properly deny claimant's Medical Assistance (MA) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) 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 applied for MA and SDA with the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS).
2. Claimant did not apply for retro MA.
3. On [REDACTED], the MRT denied.
4. On [REDACTED] the DHS issued notice.
5. On [REDACTED], claimant filed a hearing request.
6. Claimant testified at the administrative hearing that she has a disability 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 5'3" tall and weighing 305 pounds. Claimant has a high school education and an associate's degree.
9. Claimant testified that she does not smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol or use illegal drugs.
10. Claimant has a driver's license and can usually drive an automobile.
11. Claimant is not currently working. Claimant last worked in [REDACTED] as a medical receptionist. Claimant's work history is as a receptionist.
12. Claimant alleges disability on the basis of metabolic syndrome, fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, lower back pain, hypothyroidism, migraines and depression.
13. Claimant was seen in the Rheumatology Clinic at [REDACTED]. Claimant reported tingling and numbness in her toes lower back pain, and stiffness in her hands and feet. Examination found pain with internal and external rotation of both hips and with internal rotation of the right shoulder. All other joints were without abnormality and had full range of motion. Strength and sensation were intact. Diffuse allodynia was present. Reflexes were symmetric. Gait was stable. Imaging was notable for sclerosis in bilateral SI joints with subchondral irregularity in the left SI joint likely related to degenerative changes, multilevel degenerative changes in the thoracic spine with osteophytes, mild degenerative disk disease in the lumbar spine with disk height loss at L5 – S1, small bilateral plantar and retrocalcaneal spurs with degenerative changes in the bilateral first MTPs. No evidence of erosive arthritis. The physician opined that the most likely etiology of her pain was osteoarthritis in combination with fibromyalgia. She was recommended to try medication therapy and pool therapy or physical therapy.
14. A [REDACTED] Medical Examination Report completed by claimant's treating physician indicated TSH of 2.31, RA of 30 ANA of 1.16. Clinical impression of claimant was stable and claimant was able to meet her needs in the home.

### **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).

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program which provides financial assistance for disabled persons is established by 2004 PA 344. The Department of Human Services (DHS or department) administers the SDA program pursuant to MCL 400.10, *et seq.*, and MAC R 400.3151-400.3180. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Bridges Reference Manual (RFT).

Statutory authority for the SDA program states in part:

- (b) A person with a physical or mental impairment which meets federal SSI disability standards, except that the minimum duration of the disability shall be 90 days. Substance abuse alone is not defined as a basis for eligibility.

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. Although the claimant reports depression, there has been no evidence presented that it is a severe impairment. For mental disorders, severity is assessed in terms of the functional limitations imposed by the impairment. Functional limitations are assessed using the criteria in paragraph (B) of the listings for mental disorders (descriptions of restrictions of activities of daily living, social functioning; concentration, persistence, or pace; and ability to tolerate increased mental demands associated with competitive work).... 20 CFR, Part 404, Subpart P, App. 1, 12.00(C). There has been no evidence presented to show the claimant has limitations in these areas. However, the remaining impairments are physical in nature and do affect the claimant's basic work activities. Ruling any ambiguities in claimant's favor, this Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) finds that claimant meets both duration and severity. 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.

Claimant's complaints and allegations concerning impairments and limitations, when considered in light of all objective medical evidence, as well as the record as a whole, reflect an individual who has the physical and mental capacity to engage in light work activities on a regular and continuing basis.

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 is as a receptionist. According to the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, a receptionist is classified as sedentary work. Therefore, the claimant is capable of performing the work as it is at a lesser exertional level than she is capable of. The claimant is, therefore, 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 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 (6<sup>th</sup> 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.

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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.

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