

STATE OF MICHIGAN
STATE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS AND RULES

ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

IN THE MATTER OF: [REDACTED]
Claimant

Reg. No: 2007-22135
Issue No: 2009
Case No: [REDACTED]
Load No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date:
December 5, 2007
Sanilac County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Marlene B. Magyar

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, an in-person hearing was held on December 5, 2007. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

ISSUE

Did the department properly determine claimant is not disabled by Medicaid (MA) eligibility standards?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

(1) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

(2) Claimant's work experience is in home help care but she quit doing that in 2004 and has remained unemployed since (Department Exhibit #1, pages 3 and 23).

(3) Claimant's 2003 blood labs were positive for an inflated ANA titer (1:160) at that time (Client Exhibit A, page 1).

(4) Claimant filed a disability-based Medicaid (MA) application on May 14, 2007 because she incurred significant medical expense being treated for a 2006 right ankle trimalleolar fracture which happened when she tripped over her dog (Department Exhibit #1, pages 3 and 32).

(5) Claimant was admitted to [REDACTED] for open reduction/internal fixation of this fracture (ORIF) (Department Exhibit #1, page 30).

(6) Claimant's height and weight at hospital admission were [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (Department Exhibit #1, page 35) (See also Finding of Fact #1 above).

(7) Claimant's blood labs at admission showed no significant abnormal findings (Department Exhibit #1, page 30) (See also Finding of Fact #3 above).

(8) Claimant was discharged the following day (3/31/06), ambulatory with crutches (Department Exhibit #1, pages 30 and 41).

(9) Claimant's hospital discharge summary reveals she was being discharged from physical therapy because she disregarded use of a standard walker, preferring a wheelchair instead against professional advice (Department Exhibit #1, pages 46 and 47).

(10) Approximately three weeks later (4/06), claimant had to return to the hospital for another procedure because she dislocated the original ORIF (Department Exhibit #1, pages 120-122).

(11) This time, claimant used the walker at discharge as recommended (Department Exhibit #1, page 122).

(12) Claimant started physical therapy in July, 2006, but because of her fearfulness she did not follow the 20 pound weight bearing exercise as recommended, and instead continued to use the wheelchair against medical advice (Department Exhibit #1, pages 193 and 194).

(13) Claimant's right ankle fracture eventually healed with no additional complications; her orthopedic surgeon documented necessary occasional cane use in May, 2007 (Department Exhibit #1, page 13).

(14) Claimant's March 7, 2007 right ankle x-rays verify full union with residual, mild degenerative joint disease in the area but no symptoms (Department Exhibit #1, page 12).

(15) As of June 18, 2007, claimant was taking Motrin for pain management and wearing an AFO device for support and stability (Department Exhibit #1, page 3).

(16) When the department denied claimant's MA disability application, she filed a hearing request based on the above-referenced fracture residuals.

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 Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) and the Program Reference Manual (PRM).

Pursuant to Federal Rule 42 CFR 435.540, the Department of Human Services uses the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) policy in determining eligibility for disability under the Medical Assistance program. Under SSI, 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

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 to make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is being alleged, 20 CFR 416.913. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.908 and 20 CFR 416.929. By the same token, a conclusory statement by a physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind is not sufficient without supporting medical evidence to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.929.

A set order is used to determine disability. Current work activity, severity of impairments, residual functional capacity, past work, age, or education and work experience is reviewed. If there is a finding that an individual is disabled or not disabled at any point in the review, there will be no further evaluation. 20 CFR 416.920.

If an individual is working and the work is substantial gainful activity, the individual is not disabled regardless of the medical condition, education and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(c).

If the impairment or combination of impairments do not significantly limit physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, it is not a severe impairment(s) and disability does not exist. Age, education and work experience will not be considered. 20 CFR 416.920.

Statements about pain or other symptoms do not alone establish disability. There must be medical signs and laboratory findings which demonstrate a medical impairment.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

...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 blood pressure, X-rays);
- (4) Diagnosis (statement of disease or injury based on its signs and symptoms).... 20 CFR 416.913(b).

In determining disability under the law, the ability to work is measured. An individual's functional capacity for doing basic work activities is evaluated. If an individual has the ability to perform basic work activities without significant limitations, he or she is not considered disabled. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(iv).

Basic work activities are 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 residual functional capacity is what an individual can do despite limitations. All impairments will be considered in addition to ability to meet certain demands of jobs in the national economy. Physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements and other functions will be evaluated.... 20 CFR 416.945(a).

To determine the physical demands (exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, we classify jobs as sedentary, light, medium and heavy. These terms have the same meaning as they have in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*, published by the Department of Labor... 20 CFR 416.967.

Sedentary work. Sedentary work involves lifting no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. 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. Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. 20 CFR 416.967(a).

Medical findings must allow a determination of (1) the nature and limiting effects of your impairment(s) for any period in question; (2) the probable duration of the impairment; and (3) the residual functional capacity to do work-related physical and mental activities. 20 CFR 416.913(d).

Medical evidence may contain medical opinions. Medical opinions are statements from physicians and psychologists or other acceptable medical sources that reflect judgments about the nature and severity of the impairment(s), including your symptoms, diagnosis and prognosis,

what an individual can do despite impairment(s), and the physical or mental restrictions. 20 CFR 416.927(a)(2).

All of the evidence relevant to the claim, including medical opinions, is reviewed and findings are made. 20 CFR 416.927(c).

A statement by a medical source finding that an individual is "disabled" or "unable to work" does not mean that disability exists for the purposes of the program. 20 CFR 416.927(e).

If an individual fails to follow prescribed treatment which would be expected to restore their ability to engage in substantial gainful activity without good cause, there will not be a finding of disability.... 20 CFR 416.994(b)(4)(iv).

The Administrative Law Judge is responsible for making the determination or decision about whether the statutory definition of disability is met. The Administrative Law Judge reviews all medical findings and other evidence that support a medical source's statement of disability.... 20 CFR 416.927(e).

When determining disability, the federal regulations require that several considerations be analyzed in sequential order. If disability can be ruled out at any step, analysis of the next step is not required. These steps are:

1. Does the client perform Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)? If yes, the client is ineligible for MA. If no, the analysis continues to Step 2. 20 CFR 416.920(b).
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 416.920(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? If no, the analysis continues to Step 4. If yes, MA is approved. 20 CFR 416.290(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. 20 CFR 416.920(e).
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? If yes, the analysis ends and the client is ineligible for MA. If no, MA is approved. 20 CFR 416.920(f).

Claimant is not disqualified from receiving MA/retro-MA at Step 1, because she has not been gainfully employed since 2004 (See Finding of Fact #2 above).

At Step 2, claimant's diagnosed physical impairment (right ankle fracture residuals) have left her with a range of motion limitation, right lower extremity weakness and instability and intermittent pain. However, it must be noted no severe mental impairments have been shown, and claimant's minimal degenerative arthritis pain appears fully capable of adequate management with the medications currently being prescribed.

Furthermore, it must be noted the law does not require an applicant to be completely symptom free before a finding of lack of disability can be rendered. In fact, if an applicant's symptoms can be managed to the point where substantial gainful employment can be achieved, a finding of not disabled must be rendered. Nevertheless, claimant's medically managed physical impairment meets the level of severity and duration required for further analysis.

At Step 3, the medical evidence on this record does not support a finding that claimant's diagnosed impairment is severe enough to meet or equal any specifically listed impairment; consequently, the analysis must continue.

At Step 4, the record supports claimant's contention that she cannot return to home help aide work as that job required excessive standing, lifting, carrying, walking, etc., which is not possible given her right leg residuals. As such, this analysis must continue.

At Step 5, an individual's age, education and previous work experience (vocational factors) must be assessed in light of the documented impairment(s). Claimant is a younger individual with a high school education and an unskilled work history. Consequently, at Step 5, this Administrative Law Judge finds, from the medical evidence of record, that claimant retains the residual functional capacity to perform at least sedentary work, as that term is defined above. This finding is consistent with the department's State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) decision, dated March 31, 2008. As such, claimant's disputed application must remain denied.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the department properly denied claimant's May 14, 2007 MA/retro-MA application.

Accordingly, the department's decision is AFFIRMED.

/s/ _____
Marlene B. Magyar
Administrative Law Judge
for Ismael Ahmed, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: December 30, 2008

Date Mailed: January 5, 2009

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 receipt date of the rehearing decision.

MBM/vmc

[REDACTED]