

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg No.: 2012 57817
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: September 24, 2012
Wayne County DHS (82)

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 held in Detroit, Michigan on September 24, 2012. The Claimant appeared and testified. [REDACTED] ES, and [REDACTED] Case Worker, 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")?

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 on May 18, 2012 and retro MA-P (February 2012).
2. On May 30, 2012 the Medical Review Team ("MRT") found the Claimant not disabled. (Exhibit 1)
3. The Department notified the Claimant of the MRT determination on June 1, 2012.
4. On June 5, 2012, the Department received the Claimant's timely written request for hearing.

5. On July 16, 2012, the State Hearing Review Team (“SHRT”) found the Claimant not disabled. Exhibit 2
6. An Interim Order was issued on October 1, 2012 which ordered the Department obtain additional new medical information evidence to be submitted to the State Hearing Review Team. The new medical evidence was submitted to the SHRT on December 21, 2012.
7. On February 7, 2013 the State Hearing Review Team found the Claimant not disabled.
8. The Claimant alleged physical disabling impairments due to carpal tunnel syndrome in right hand, hepatitis C, and gout in both legs.
9. The Claimant alleged mental disabling impairment(s) including depression and anxiety.
10. At the time of hearing, the Claimant was [REDACTED] and is now [REDACTED] years old, with an [REDACTED] birth date; was 5’7” in height; and weighed 163 pounds with reported weight loss of 15 pounds in 6 months due to his medical conditions.
11. The Claimant has a high school education has worked in as a maintenance man cleaning and mopping floors and general janitorial work. The Claimant last worked in 2009.
12. The Claimant’s impairments have lasted, or are expected to last, continuously for a period of 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 CF R 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) An individual is not disabled regardless of the medical condition, age, education, and work experience, if the individual is working and the work is a substantial, gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4)(i) Substantial gainful activity means work that involves doing significant and productive physical or mental duties and is done (or intended) for pay or profit. 20 CFR 416.910(a)(b) Substantial gainful activity is work activity that is both substantial and gainful. 20 CFR 416.972 Work may be substantial even if it is done on a part-time basis or if an individual does less, with less responsibility, and gets paid less than prior employment. 20 CFR 416.972(a) Gainful work activity is work activity that is done for pay or profit. 20 CFR 416.972(b)

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 based on mental disabling impairments due to depression and daily anxiety.

The Claimant has alleged physical disabling impairments including carpal tunnel in his right wrist, gout and hepatitis C.

A summary of the claimant's Medical evidence follows.

A mental status evaluation and Mental Residual Functional Assessment was performed on [REDACTED]. The Claimant's treating psychiatrist completed the evaluation. The Claimant had been treating at this clinic for two years. The evaluation diagnosis was Major Depressive Disorder and Anxiety, noted alcohol abuse in sustained full remission. The GAF score was 50 lower than the previous score on year ago of 55. The evaluation noted that Claimant has little contact with others due to his mental condition. Judgment and insight was fair. Mood was noted as depressed and anxious. Treatment records showed altered mood and depression rated 7 out of 10. The Mental Residual Functional assessment noted that the Claimant was markedly limited in all categories except his ability to understand one or two step instructions in which he was rated moderately limited. A review of the assessment indicates that with regard to those categories regarding Adaptation, Sustained Concentration and Persistence, Understanding and Memory, and Interaction the Claimant would not be able to sustain any employment.

During the hearing the Claimant presented credible testimony that he suffers anxiety every day, suffers anger spells when around others and tries to remove himself, has entertained suicidal thoughts with no plan, and his appetite is affected when depressed and thus fluctuates. The Claimant has daily difficulty sleeping.

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 some objective medical evidence establishing that he does have some physical and mental limitations on his ability to perform basic work activities. Accordingly, the Claimant has an impairment, or combination thereof, that has more than a *de minimis* 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 asserts mental disabling impairments due to Depression and Anxiety and has been diagnosed by his treating physician with Major Depressive Disorder and Anxiety.

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;

In this case, the record reveals ongoing treatment for depression and anxiety. Medical records document a pervasive loss of interest in activities, sleep disturbance, episodes of anxiety, and depression and marked restrictions of social functioning and difficulties maintaining concentration, persistence or pace as well as adaptation. The Claimant has been treating consistently since [REDACTED] sees his therapist weekly and psychiatrist monthly. The Claimant credibly testified that he suffers from emotional problems and that he avoids crowds and going out in public due to his anxiety and anger problems. The Claimant has trouble sleeping which is documented in both his physical and mental evaluations. His anxiety attacks are recurrent and occur at least once a day. His anger issues are daily and he isolates himself from others.

As a result, the records and testimony show that the Claimant has marked restrictions in daily living and social functioning and adaptation and has a GAF of 50. Deference was also accorded to the medical opinion of [REDACTED] the Claimant's treating psychiatrist. The evaluations of the treating physician and the medical conclusion of a "treating" physician is "controlling" if it is well-supported by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques and is not inconsistent with the other substantial evidence in the case record under 20 CFR§ 404.1527(d)(2),

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 A Depressive Syndrome. Accordingly, the Claimant is found disabled at Step 3 with no further analysis required.

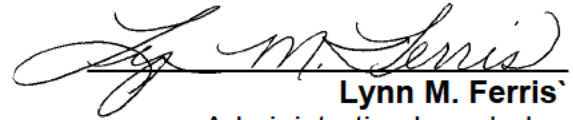
DECISION AND ORDER

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 benefit program.

Accordingly, It is ORDERED:

1. The Department's determination is REVERSED.
2. The Department shall initiate processing of the May 18, 2012 MA-P and retro MA-P application (February 2012) 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 review the Claimant's continued eligibility in March 2014 in accordance with department policy.


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

Date Signed: March 6, 2013
Date Mailed: March 6, 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 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 at
Michigan Administrative Hearings
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P. O. Box 30639
Lansing, Michigan 48909-07322

LMF/cl

cc:

