

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No: 201264386
Issue No: 2009/4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: October 30, 2012
Wayne County DHS (District #18)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Landis Y. Lain

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 October 30, 2012. Claimant personally appeared and testified.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (the department) properly deny claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P) and State Disability Assistance (SDA)?

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 April 25, 2012, claimant filed an application for Medical Assistance, State Disability Assistance and retroactive Medical Assistance benefits.
2. On July 3, 2012, the Medical Review Team denied claimant's application stating that claimant could perform prior work.
3. On July 6, 2012, the department caseworker sent claimant notice that his application was denied.
4. On July 16, 2012, claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
5. On August 23, 2012, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating in its analysis and recommendation:

The claimant has a diagnosis of syringomyelia and syringobulbia with MRI documentation of two tiny syrinx cavities in the thoracic spine. He has abnormality of gait and reports significant pain. He reported that he feels off balance and notices that he falls towards the right side. He had difficulty with heel and toe walk. He had positive trigger points in the spine and decreased range of motion. His sensory findings, reflexes and strength were within normal limits. The claimant's pain complaints are felt to be credible because his syringomyelia can cause significant pain. The claimant is not currently engaging in substantial gainful activity (SGA) based on the information that is available in the file. The claimant's impairments do not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security listing. The medical evidence of record indicates that the claimant retains the capacity to perform a wide range of sedentary work. A finding about the capacity for prior work has not been made. However, this information is not material because all potentially applicable medical-vocational guidelines would direct a finding of not disabled given the claimant's age, education and residual functional capacity (RFC). Therefore, based on the claimant's vocational profile of a younger individual, high school education and history of semi-skilled work, MA-P is denied using Vocational Rule 201.28 as a guide. Retroactive MA-P was considered in this case and is also denied. SDA is denied per PEM 261 because the nature and severity of the claimant's impairments would not preclude work activity at the above stated level for 90 days.

6. The hearing was held on October 30, 2012. At the hearing, claimant waived the time periods and requested to submit additional medical information.
7. Additional medical information was submitted and sent to the State Hearing Review Team on October 30, 2012.
8. On December 20, 2012, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating in its analysis and recommendation:

The medical evidence supports that the claimant would reasonably retain the ability to perform sedentary exertional tasks of a simple and repetitive nature. The claimant is not currently engaging in substantial gainful activity based on the information that is available in the file. The claimant's impairments/combination of impairments does not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security

Administration (SSA) listing. The medical evidence of record indicates that the claimant retains the capacity to perform sedentary exertional tasks of a simple and repetitive nature. The claimant's past work was as a : job coach, 094.224-022, 6L; patient care technician, 355.674-014, 4M; pest control, 389.684.010, 5L; and, maintenance administrator, 822.361-030,6S. As such, the claimant would be unable to perform the duties associated with their past work. Likewise, the claimant's past work skills will not transfer to other occupations. Therefore, based on the claimant's vocational profile of 35 years old, at least a high school education and a history of sedentary and light exertional, skilled; and, medium exertional, semi-skilled employment, MA-P is denied per 20 CFR 416.920 (e&g) and using Vocational Rule 201.27 as a guide. Retroactive MA-P was considered in this determination and is also denied. SDA is denied per BEM 261 because the nature and severity of the claimant's impairments would not preclude work activity at the above stated level for 90 days. Listings 1.02/04, 4.05, 11.14 and 12.04/06 were considered in this determination.

9. Claimant is a 34-year-old man whose birth date is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5'10" tall and weighs 190 pounds. Claimant is a high school graduate and is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
10. Claimant last worked on April 3, 2012 with a medical team as a patient care assistant. Claimant has also worked as a pest control technician, maintenance worker and at a call center for [REDACTED] and a group home.
11. Claimant alleges as disabling impairments: bulging disc, syringomyelia, degenerative disc disease, stenosis, extreme pain, numbness and tingling, anxiety, depression, heart arrhythmia as well as hearing loss.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The regulations governing the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are found in the Michigan Administrative Code, MAC R 400.901-400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because his or her claim for assistance has been denied. MAC R 400.903(1). Clients have the right to contest a department decision affecting eligibility or benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. The department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness of that decision. BAM 600.

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 Program Reference Manual (PRM).

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 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

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).

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).

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).

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).

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).

At Step 1, claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity and is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

The subjective and objective medical evidence on the record indicates that claimant testified on the record that he went to trade school and became a certified nurse's assistant and he attended three years of college in nursing. He lives with his parents in a house and he is single with no children under 18 and no income. Claimant does receive Food Assistance Program benefits and he does have a driver's license and drives two times per week approximately a mile to the pharmacy or to the store. Claimant testified that he does not cook, grocery shop or clean his home and that his hobby is drawing and he watches television constantly and he does use the computer approximately one hour per day. Claimant testified that he can stand for ten minutes at a time and can sit for 15 minutes at a time. Claimant can walk one block but he cannot squat or tie his shoes. He can shower and dress himself only slowly and bend at the waist with difficulty. He can touch his toes. Claimant testified that he does have some crepitus in his knees. Claimant testified that his level of pain on a scale from one to ten without medication is a 10 to a 15 and with medication is an eight. Claimant testified that he is left-handed and that he has numbing and tingling and loss of sensation in his hands and arms and he has pain, numbness and tingling in his legs and feet. Claimant testified that the heaviest weight he can carry is five pounds and he does smoke a pack of cigarettes per day. His doctor has not told him to stop smoking. Claimant testified that on a typical day he drinks coffee, takes his medications, takes a nap, eats, showers, does phone calls and mail, then he naps, watches television, then he has dinner, watches television and takes his pills. Claimant testified that he needs further testing and that his condition is considered terminal.

An MRI of the cervical spine dated December 2011 was normal. MRI of the thoracic spine dated December 2011 revealed two tiny syrinx cavities in the mid and distal spine cord T7-8 to T9 and T11-12 to T12-L1. An MRI without contrast of the lumbar spine dated December 2011 revealed mild multilevel degenerative disc disease and high signal in the distal cord measuring 3.3 cm. Four extremity EMG in January 2012 was normal (page 13). On examination April 25, 2012 the claimant reported constant burning and aching pain generalized in the upper back and lower back. He reported that he is always in pain but the medications do make life bearable. He feels off balance and notices that he falls toward the right side (page 10). He appeared to be in obvious pain. He had good eye contact and showed normal grooming and appropriate dress. He had full range of motion of the cervical spine. Range of motion of the shoulders was normal but painful. There were no impingement signs. He had difficulty with lower extremity coordination. Tone was normal in all four extremities and no atrophy was observed in any extremity. He had pain with motion of the lumbar spine. Facet load bearing maneuver was positive bilaterally. His right hemipelvis protrudes compared to his left. Range of motion of the right hip was limited and painful. Strength, sensation and reflexes of the upper and lower extremities were within normal limits bilaterally (page 12). Hoffman's was absent bilaterally. Homan's sign was absent bilaterally. The Drop Arm Test was negative bilaterally. His gait analysis revealed that he was able with difficulty to transfer and ambulate about the room. He had difficulty with heel and toe

walk. Trigger points were found in the right lumbar paraspinal musculature and left lumbar paraspinal musculature. Diagnoses included Syringomyelia and Syringobulbia, abnormality of gait, lumbago, pain in the thoracic spine, spasm of muscle, lumbar facet syndrome, lumbar disc degeneration and constipation (page 13). A July 5, 2012 mental status evaluation indicated that claimant had a AXIS V GAF of 70 and was diagnosed with depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, and obsessive compulsive disorder. His mental ability to relate to others including fellow workers and supervisors is moderately impaired. He was able to pull a rapport with the examiner. His mental ability to understand, remember and carry out tasks appeared to be mildly impaired. His mental ability to maintain attention, concentration, persistence, pacing is mildly impaired. The claimant's mental ability to withstand stress and pressure associated with day-to-day work activity is moderately impaired. He will be able to manage benefit funds and reports a successful history of money management. An October 24, 2012 medical examination reports that claimant indicates that claimant's pulse rate was 76, his blood pressure was 124/90, height was 5/10," weight 193, body mass index 27.69. The general appearance was normal. He was well-appearing in obvious discomfort. He was awake, alert and oriented. He reflected normal development. He showed good eye contact. His nutritional status appeared adequate. He appeared somewhat anxious and comfortable. He showed normal grooming and appropriate dress. Examination of the trunk was performed. He had no atrophy in the extremities. He had decreased range of motion in all cervical planes. Additional findings include mild pain experienced from range of motion in all cervical planes. Range of motion of the shoulders was normal but painful. Compression over the shoulders produced no areas of tenderness. Sensation of the upper left extremity was normal. Sensation of the right upper extremity was decreased. Upper extremity strength was within normal limits. Sensation in lower left extremity is decreased. Sensation in the right lower extremity is normal. Strength in the lower extremities is within normal limits bilaterally. Reflexes of the lower extremities are present bilaterally. There is no lower extremity edema or calf tenderness to palpation.

At Step 2, claimant has the burden of proof of establishing that she has a severely restrictive physical or mental impairment that has lasted or is expected to last for the duration of at least 12 months. There is insufficient objective clinical medical evidence in the record that claimant suffers a severely restrictive physical or mental impairment. Claimant has reports of pain in multiple areas of his body; however, there are no corresponding clinical findings that support the reports of symptoms and limitations made by the claimant. There are no laboratory or x-ray findings listed in the file which support claimant's contention of disability. The clinical impression is that claimant is stable. There is no medical finding that claimant has any muscle atrophy or trauma, abnormality or injury that is consistent with a deteriorating condition. In short, claimant has restricted himself from tasks associated with occupational functioning based upon his reports of pain (symptoms) rather than medical findings. Reported symptoms are an insufficient basis upon which a finding that claimant has met the evidentiary burden of proof can be made. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the medical record is insufficient to establish that claimant has a severely restrictive physical impairment.

Claimant alleges the following disabling mental impairments: depression and anxiety.

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 is insufficient objective medical/psychiatric evidence in the record indicating claimant suffers severe mental limitations. There is no mental residual functional capacity assessment in the record. There is insufficient evidence contained in the file of depression or a cognitive dysfunction that is so severe that it would prevent claimant from working at any job. Claimant was oriented to time, person and place during the hearing. Claimant was able to answer all of the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. The evidentiary record is insufficient to find that claimant suffers a severely restrictive mental impairment. For these reasons, this Administrative Law Judge finds that claimant has failed to meet his burden of proof at Step 2. Claimant must be denied benefits at this step based upon his failure to meet the evidentiary burden.

If claimant had not been denied at Step 2, the analysis would proceed to Step 3 where the medical evidence of claimant's condition does not give rise to a finding that he would meet a statutory listing in the code of federal regulations.

If claimant had not already been denied at Step 2, this Administrative Law Judge would have to deny him again at Step 4 based upon his ability to perform his past relevant work. There is no evidence upon which this Administrative Law Judge could base a finding that claimant is unable to perform work in which he has engaged in, in the past. Therefore, if claimant had not already been denied at Step 2, he would be denied again at Step 4.

The Administrative Law Judge will continue to proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine whether or not claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his prior jobs.

At Step 5, the burden of proof shifts to the department to establish that claimant does not have residual functional capacity.

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).

Light work. Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 10 pounds. Even though the weight lifted may be very little, a job is in this category when it requires a good deal of walking or standing, or when it involves sitting most of the time with some pushing and pulling of arm or leg controls.... 20 CFR 416.967(b).

Claimant has submitted insufficient objective medical evidence that he lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his prior employment or that he is physically unable to do light or sedentary tasks if demanded of him. Claimant's activities of daily living do not appear to be very limited and he should be able to perform light or sedentary work even with his impairments. Claimant has failed to provide the necessary objective medical evidence to establish that he has a severe impairment or combination of impairments which prevent him from performing any level of work for a period of 12 months. The claimant's testimony as to his limitations indicates that he should be able to perform light or sedentary work.

There is insufficient objective medical/psychiatric evidence contained in the file of depression or a cognitive dysfunction that is so severe that it would prevent claimant from working at any job. Claimant was able to answer all the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. Claimant was oriented to time, person and place during the hearing. Claimant's complaints of pain, while profound and credible, are out of proportion to the objective medical evidence contained in the file as it relates to claimant's ability to perform work. Therefore, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the objective medical evidence on the record does not establish that claimant has no residual functional capacity. Claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 5 based upon the fact that he has not established by objective medical evidence that he cannot perform light or sedentary work even with his impairments. Under the medical vocational guidelines, a younger individual (age 35) with a more than high school education and unskilled to semi-skilled work history who is limited to light or sedentary work is not considered disabled pursuant to Medical Vocational Rule 201.28.

It should be noted that claimant continues to smoke despite the fact that his doctor has told him to quit. Claimant is not in compliance with his treatment program.

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.

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

LYL/db

cc:

