

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2013-8295
Issue No.: 4031
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: February 13, 2013
County: Kent

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Vicki L. Armstrong

HEARING DECISION

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge upon the Claimant's request for a hearing made pursuant to Michigan Compiled Laws 400.9 and 400.37, which govern the administrative hearing and appeal process. After due notice, a telephone hearing was commenced on February 13, 2013, from Lansing, Michigan. Claimant personally appeared and testified. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included Assistant Payment Supervisor [REDACTED] and Eligibility Specialist [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (the department) properly determine that Claimant was no longer disabled and deny his review application for State Disability Assistance (SDA) based upon medical improvement?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

- (1) Claimant was a SDA benefit recipient and his SDA case was scheduled for review in September, 2012.
- (2) On June 12, 2012, Claimant filed a Re-determination for SDA benefits alleging continued disability.
- (3) On October 9, 2012, the Medical Review Team denied Claimant's application indicating that Claimant was denied for continuing eligibility. (Depart Ex. A, pp 10-11).

- (4) On October 12, 2012, the department caseworker sent Claimant notice that his SDA case would be closed based upon medical improvement.
- (5) On October 23, 2012, Claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
- (6) On January 4, 2013, the State Hearing Review Team denied Claimant's Redetermination indicating the medical evidence of record indicates Claimant retains the capacity to perform tasks that avoid the use of ropes, ladders, scaffolding and exposure to unprotected heights and dangerous machinery.
- (7) Claimant was receiving SDA at the time of this review.
- (8) Claimant alleges his disabling impairment's are syncopal episodes and the injuries he has received as a result of them.
- (9) Claimant is a 48-year-old man whose birth date is [REDACTED] Claimant is 5'6" tall and weighs 260 pounds. Claimant completed the ninth grade and able read and write but does not have basic math skills.
- (10) Claimant last worked in 2011 as an overhead crane operator when he passed out at work.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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 Mich Admin Code, Rules 400.3151-400.3180. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), the Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and the Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

Current legislative amendments to the Act delineate eligibility criteria as implemented by department policy set forth in program manuals. 2004 PA 344, Sec. 604, establishes the State Disability Assistance program. It reads in part:

Sec. 604 (1). The department shall operate a state disability assistance program. Except as provided in subsection (3), persons eligible for this program shall include needy citizens of the United States or aliens exempt from the Supplemental Security Income citizenship requirement who are at least 18 years of age or emancipated minors meeting one or more of the following requirements:

(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.

Specifically, this Act provides minimal cash assistance to individuals with some type of severe, temporary disability which prevents him or her from engaging in substantial gainful work activity for at least ninety (90) days.

Pursuant to the federal regulations at 20 CFR 416.994, once a client is determined eligible for disability benefits, the eligibility for such benefits must be reviewed periodically. Before determining that a client is no longer eligible for disability benefits, the agency must establish that there has been a medical improvement of the client's impairment that is related to the client's ability to work. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5).

To assure that disability reviews are carried out in a uniform manner, that a decision of continuing disability can be made in the most expeditious and administratively efficient way, and that any decisions to stop disability benefits are made objectively, neutrally, and are fully documented, we will follow specific steps in reviewing the question of whether your disability continues. Our review may cease and benefits may be continued at any point if we determine there is sufficient evidence to find that you are still unable to engage in substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5).

The first question asks:

- (i) Are you engaging in substantial gainful activity? If you are (and any applicable trial work period has been completed), we will find disability to have ended (see paragraph (b)(3)(v) of this section).

Claimant is not disqualified from this step because he has not engaged in substantial gainful activity at any time relevant to this matter. Furthermore, the evidence on the record fails to establish that Claimant has a severe impairment which meets or equals a listed impairment found at 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 1. Therefore, the analysis continues. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5)(ii).

The next step asks the question if there has been medical improvement.

Medical improvement is any decrease in the medical severity of your impairment(s) which was present at the time of the most recent favorable medical decision that you were disabled or continued to be disabled. A determination that

there has been a decrease in medical severity must be based on changes (improvement) in the symptoms, signs and/or laboratory findings associated with your impairment(s). 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(i).

If there is a decrease in medical severity as shown by the symptoms, signs and laboratory findings, we then must determine if it is related to your ability to do work. In paragraph (b)(1)(iv) of this section, we explain the relationship between medical severity and limitation on functional capacity to do basic work activities (or residual functional capacity) and how changes in medical severity can affect your residual functional capacity. In determining whether medical improvement that has occurred is related to your ability to do work, we will assess your residual functional capacity (in accordance with paragraph (b)(1)(iv) of this section) based on the current severity of the impairment(s) which was present at your last favorable medical decision. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(2)(ii).

The State Hearing Review Team upheld the denial of SDA benefits on the basis that Claimant retained the capacity to perform tasks that avoid the use of ropes, ladders, scaffolding and exposure to unprotected heights and dangerous machinery.

Claimant was approved for SDA benefits by the Medical Review Team on September 26, 2011. Pursuant to the federal regulations, at medical review, the agency has the burden of not only proving Claimant's medical condition has improved, but that the improvement relates to the client's ability to do basic work activities. The agency has the burden of establishing that Claimant is currently capable of doing basic work activities based on objective medical evidence from qualified medical sources. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5).

In this case, the agency has not met its burden of proof. The agency has provided no medical evidence that indicates Claimant's impairment has improved or that the improvement may be related to his ability to do basic work activities. The agency provided no objective medical evidence from qualified medical sources that show Claimant is currently capable of doing basic work activities. Accordingly, the agency's SDA eligibility determination cannot be upheld at this time.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the department erred in proposing to close Claimant's SDA case based upon a finding of improvement at review.

Accordingly, the department's action is **REVERSED**, and this case is returned to the local office for benefit continuation as long as all other eligibility criteria are met, with Claimant's next mandatory medical review scheduled in March, 2014 (unless he is approved eligible for Social Security disability benefits by that time).

It is SO ORDERED.

/s/
Vicki L. Armstrong
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: _____

Date Mailed: _____

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

2013-8295/VLA

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cc:

