

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 20136708  
Issue No.: 2009; 4031  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: February 20, 2013  
County: Emmet County DHS

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Janice G. Spodarek

**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. Claimant personally appeared and testified. On behalf of the department [REDACTED], ES Worker appeared.

**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 August 22, 2012, Claimant applied for MA and SDA with the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS).
2. Claimant did not apply for retro MA.
3. On October 8, 2012, the MRT denied.
4. On October 11, 2012, the DHS issued notice.
5. On October 22, 2012, Claimant filed a hearing request.
6. On December 13, 2012, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) denied Claimant. Pursuant to the Claimant's request to hold the record open for

the submission of new and additional medical documentation, on June 7, 2013 SHRT once again denied Claimant.

7. Claimant has an SSI application pending with the Social Security Administration (SSA).
8. Claimant is a 51-year-old standing 5'5" tall and weighing 161 pounds.
9. Claimant does not have an alcohol/drug abuse problem or history. Claimant smokes. Claimant has a nicotine addiction.
10. Claimant testified that she does not have a driver's license.
11. Claimant has [REDACTED].
12. Claimant is not currently working. Claimant was previously incarcerated and was released in August, 2012. Claimant's work history is indicated by Claimant's testimony that she last worked in 2010 doing dish washing at [REDACTED]. Claimant's work history is medium exertional, unskilled.
13. Claimant alleges disability on the basis of sciatica, gastroesophageal reflux disorder (GERD), hypothyroidism, depression. The December 13, 2012 SHRT disorder is adopted:
14. The December 7, 2012 SHRT findings and conclusions of its decision are adopted and incorporated by reference herein/to the following extent:

An examination dated August 20, 2012 showed the claimant's x-ray of the lumbar spine dated October, 2011 showed disc changes at L4/L5, facet joint arthritic changes throughout the lumbar spine and mild muscle strain. Exhibit 18.

A mental status dated July 31, 2012 showed the claimant had no signs of psychosis or mania. Her appearance was appropriate. Behavior was unremarkable. Speech was clear. Her mood was anxious and irritable and her affect was appropriate. Thought processes were logical and thought content was unremarkable. Diagnosis included depression and opioid dependence. Exhibit 14.

On July 5, 2012, the Claimant's blood pressure was 145/98. Her neck was supple, without adenopathy or enlarged thyroid. Her back/spine revealed no kyphosis or soliosis. She did have posterior tenderness and decreased motion. The extremities appeared normal. Exhibit 16.

Denied per 202.10 as a guide.

15. The June 7, 2013 subsequent SHRT decision is adopted and incorporated by reference herein/to the following extent:

[REDACTED], August 13, 2012, page 11, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] diagnosed depression and opiod dependence; daily functioning unimpaired.

Medical source statement (MSS): occasionally less than ten pounds.

The medical evidence of record indicated that the claimant reasonable retains the capacity to perform light exertional tasks. There is evidence of a psychiatric impairment that does not severely impair the claimant's ability to perform gainful tasks.

The MSS provided has been considered, but considering the totality of the evidence, this statement is not fully supported in its conclusions.

Denied per 20CFR 416.20 (e)(g)

16. A December 14, 2012 MRI of the lumbar spine concludes disc bulging without herniation.
17. [REDACTED] evaluation indicates Claimant is essentially independent with activities of daily living but may need assistance with traveling.
18. [REDACTED] provider visit with complaint of back ache on July 5, 2012 states in part: "Physical exam does not support acute severe exasperation of low back pain." Exhibit 16.
19. April 3, 2012 Department of Corrections assessment for back pain states in part:  
  
...the following inconsistencies were noted on the exam: pain is in the L3, L4 dermatomes with no complaints in L5. Straight leg raise was strongly positive when supine but not positive at all sitting. She stands hunched over and says she cannot straighten her back because of pain, but when she lies flat on her back with her legs outstretched she says she is comfortable. She says L4-L5 is tender to palpation and axial loading makes it worse. Exhibit 3.
20. Claimant argued that she had medical evidence but none was identified to indicate that she needed surgery.

### **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).

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

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).

It is noted that Congress removed obesity from the Listing of Impairments shortly after the removal of drug addition and alcoholism. This removal reflects the view that there is a strong behavioral component to obesity. Thus, obesity in-and-of itself is not sufficient to show statutory disability.

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. Ruling any ambiguities in Claimant's favor, this Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) finds that Claimant meets both. 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.

The fourth step of the analysis looks at the ability of the applicant to return to past relevant work. This step examines the physical and mental demands of the work done by Claimant in the past. 20 CFR 416.920(f).

The undersigned administrative law judge concurs with SHRT in finding Claimant not disabled at Step 4 of the analysis.

In reaching this conclusion, it is noted that some of Claimant's MRIs indicate arthritic changes. There is no indication that these are unusual. Arthritis is part of normal aging and is not considered statutorily disabling under Federal or State law.

It is also noted that Claimant's MRI in 2012 indicates a bulging but not herniated disc.

Claimant indicated she needs surgery; Claimant was unable to identify where in her medical records surgery is indicated.

While Claimant's treating physician puts a lifting restriction of up to eleven pounds it is noted that Claimant is considered essentially independent in her activities of daily living.

As indicated by SHRT, the MSS is considered conclusionary under the issues and considerations found at 20 CFR 416.927 and .928.

Taking all the evidence as a whole, this ALJ finds that the collective medical evidence does not indicate that Claimant is not capable of engaging in SGA, particularly, as reflected in consistencies noted on exhibits 3 and 16. Statutory disability is not shown.

### **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/  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Janice G. Spodarek  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 7/16/13  
Date Mailed: 7/17/13



**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 mailing 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

JGS/hj

cc:

