

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 2013-60437
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: December 4, 2013
County: Montmorency

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Landis Y. Lain

HEARING DECISION

Following Claimant's request for a hearing, this matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and 400.37; 42 CFR 431.200 to 431.250; and 45 CFR 205.10. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on December 4, 2013, from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included Claimant. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED], Eligibility Specialist.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (the Department) properly deny Claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P)?

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 4, 2013, Claimant filed an application for Medical Assistance and retroactive Medical Assistance benefits alleging disability.
2. On July 11, 2013, the Medical Review Team denied Claimant's application stating that Claimant could perform other work pursuant to medical vocational rule 202.15.
3. On July 12, 2013, the Department caseworker sent Claimant notice that his application was denied.
4. On July 18, 2013, Claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the Department's negative action.

5. On September 20, 2013, the State Hearing Review Team again denied Claimant's application.
6. Claimant is a [REDACTED]-year-old [REDACTED] whose birth date is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5'9" tall and weighs 225 pounds. Claimant is a [REDACTED] graduate and has an [REDACTED]. Claimant is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
7. Claimant last worked [REDACTED]. Claimant has also worked as a [REDACTED].
8. Claimant alleges as disabling impairments: degenerative disc disease, arthropathy, and severe back pain.

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 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 has not worked since [REDACTED]. Claimant 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 lives alone in a house and his family currently sends him some [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]. He is single with no children under 18 and he has no income. Claimant does receive \$ [REDACTED] in Food Assistance Program benefits per month. Claimant does have a [REDACTED] and drives everyday 10 to 15 miles. Claimant does cook every day and cooks things like meat, potatoes, soup and sandwiches. Claimant does grocery shop once per month with no help needed. Claimant does clean his home, does laundry and dishes. Claimant hunts and fish as a hobby and hunted this year. Claimant does watch television 3 to 4 hours per day and uses the computer 45 hours per week. Claimant testified on the record that he can stand for 30 to 45 minutes. He is able to sit for 5 minutes on the hard chair and on a soft chair he can sit for 1 to 1 ½ hours. Claimant testified he can walk 100 to 150 yards on the cement and can walk about a quarter of a mile in the woods. Claimant cannot squat or touch his toes. Claimant is able to bend at the waist and can shower and dress himself. Claimant can tie his shoes if he is sitting down. Claimant stated that his level of pain is normally a 5 or a 6 and sometimes goes up to an 8 or a 9. He does not take medication. Claimant is right-handed and has some arthritis in his hands and arms. His right leg is painful. The heaviest weight he can carry is 15 to 20 pounds. He is able to engage in sexual relations. He does drink a 12 pack of beer per week.

An [REDACTED] indicates the Claimant's blood pressure was 132/92, pulse 76, respirations 12, temperature 98.2. He weighed 227 pounds and his height was 69 inches tall. He was alert and oriented in no obvious acute distress, although he did have some difficulty with changes position and appear to be a comfortable with doing so. HEENT: pupils are equal, round and reactive to light. Pharynx is clear. The neck was supple with no adenopathy. No carotid bruits. The chest

was clear. The heart had regular rate and rhythm without murmur or gallop. The abdomen was soft and non-tender. No masses, no aortic or renal bruits. No femoral bruits. Peripheral pulses were full and equal bilaterally in the extremities in the neurological area muscle tone and strength appeared equal bilaterally at 5/5. Straight leg raising produced some low back pain but no apparent radicular pain. Grip strength is full and equal bilaterally. Some moderate tenderness to palpation in the L – 4 to the S – 1 spinal region to palpation. He had decreased range of motion with attempts at flexion and extension of his back. He had appropriate sensitivity. He was assessed with chronic back and neck pain, pages 50 – 51. An [REDACTED] of the lumbar spine dated [REDACTED] [REDACTED] revealed moderately severe chronic degenerative disc disease at L4 – five and L5 – S1 and moderately severe bilateral facet offer be at L3 – four with asymmetric accumulation of fluid within the right facet joint at L5 – S1, pages 1 – two. And August 30, 2013 Claimant was 69 inches tall weighed 225 pounds. He walked with a limp and was able to ambulate without use of an assistive device. Manual muscle testing revealed strength is 5/5 throughout. Resources were symmetric a 2/4. Grip strength was full of digital dexterity was intact. Sensation was intact. There was no atrophy. He had painful range of motion of lumbar and cervical records. The Claimant is not currently engaging in substantial gainful activity based on the information is 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 the Claimant retains the capacity to perform a wide range of light work.

At Step 2, Claimant has the burden of proof of establishing that he 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. 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.

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, an individual (age [REDACTED] with a [REDACTED], an associate's degree and an unskilled work history who is limited to light work is not considered disabled pursuant to medical vocational rule 202.15.**

The Department has established by the necessary competent, material and substantial evidence on the record that it was acting in compliance with Department policy when it determined that Claimant was not eligible to receive Medical Assistance and/or retroactive Medical Assistance.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the Department has appropriately established on the record that it was acting in compliance with Department policy when it denied Claimant's application for Medical Assistance or Retroactive Medical Assistance benefits. The Claimant should be able to perform a wide range of light or sedentary work even with his impairments. The Department has established its case by a preponderance of the evidence.

Accordingly, the Department's decision is **AFFIRMED**.

/s/

Landis Y. Lain
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 12/6/13

Date Mailed: 12/9/13

NOTICE OF APPEAL: 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 or Reconsideration was made, within 30 days of the receipt date of the Decision and Order of Reconsideration or Rehearing Decision.

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).

A Request for Rehearing or Reconsideration may be granted when one of the following exists:

- Newly discovered evidence that existed at the time of the original hearing that could affect the outcome of the original hearing decision;
- Misapplication of manual policy or law in the hearing decision which led to a wrong conclusion;
- Typographical, mathematical or other obvious error in the hearing decision that affects the rights of the client;
- Failure of the ALJ to address in the hearing decision relevant issues raised in the hearing request.

The Department, AHR or the Claimant must specify all reasons for the request. MAHS will not review any response to a request for rehearing/reconsideration. A request must be *received* in MAHS within 30 days of the date the hearing decision is mailed.

2013 – 60437/LYL

The written request must be faxed to (517) 335-6088 and be labeled as follows:

Attention: MAHS Rehearing/Reconsideration Request

If submitted by mail, the written request must be addressed as follows:

Michigan Administrative Hearings
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P.O. Box 30639
Lansing, Michigan 48909-07322

LYL/tb

cc:

