

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No: 2013-19289
Issue No: 2009;4031
Case No: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: April 4, 2013
Kent County DHS

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 April 4, 2013. Claimant personally appeared and testified. Claimant was represented at hearing by [REDACTED], law clerk, of [REDACTED]. The department was represented at the hearing by Assistant Attorney General, [REDACTED] ([REDACTED]).

ISSUE

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

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 13, 2012, claimant filed an application for Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance benefits alleging disability.
2. On October 24, 2012, the Medical Review Team denied claimant's application stating that claimant could perform other work pursuant to Medical/Vocation Rule 202.13.
3. On October 29, 2012, the department caseworker sent claimant notice that her application was denied.
4. On December 20, 2012, claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
5. On February 11, 2013, the State Hearing Review Team again denied claimant's application stating in its analysis and recommended decision: the claimant's blood pressure was elevated with no evidence of organ

damage. There were no nodules detected. She was neurologically intact. The migraines are being treated medically. The medical evidence shows that she may be depressed at times. She is still able to remember, understand and communicate with others. As a result of the claimant's combination of severe physical and mental condition, she is restricted to performing light unskilled work. She retains the capacity to lift up to 20 lbs occasionally, 10 lbs frequently and stand and walk for up to 6 of 8 hours. Claimant is not engaging in substantial gainful activity at this time. Claimant's severe impairments do not meet or equal any listing. Despite the impairments, she retains the capacity to perform light unskilled work. Therefore, based on the claimant's vocational profile (claimant approaching advance age, 12th grade education, and light work history); MA-P is denied using Vocational Rule 202.203 as a guide. SDA is denied per PEM 261 because the information in file is inadequate to ascertain whether the claimant is or would be disabled for 90 days. Retroactive MA-P benefits are denied at step 5 of the sequential evaluation; claimant retains the capacity to perform light unskilled work.

6. On the date of hearing claimant was a 51-year-old woman whose birth date is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5'2" tall and weighs 138 pounds. Claimant is a high school graduate. Claimant is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
7. Claimant last worked five years before the hearing at [REDACTED] as a machine operator. Claimant has also worked as a cook and as a dietary aide.
8. Claimant alleges as disabling impairments: migraines, hypertension, hypothyroidism, seizures, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and depression.

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 Program Administrative Manual (PAM), the Program Eligibility Manual (PEM) 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 lives with her sister in a house and is widowed with no children under 18 who live with her. Claimant has no income and does receive Food Assistance Program benefits. Claimant does have a driver's license and does drive 1-2 times per week to the grocery store and to doctor appointments. Claimant does not cook but she does grocery shop 1 time per week and is helped by her sister because she alleges she is confused. Claimant testified that she does dishes, vacuums and makes the bed when she feels well and she crochets doilies as a hobby and watches television 3 hours per day. Claimant testified that she can stand for 2-3 hours at a time, sit for 4-5 hours at a time and walk for ½ mile. Claimant testified that she is able to squat, bend at waist, shower and dress herself and tie her shoes but not touch her toes. Claimant testified that her back, knees, hands/arms and legs/feet are fine and that she is right handed and the heaviest weight she can carry is 10 lbs. Claimant testified that she smokes ¼ pack of cigarettes per day, her doctors have told her to quit and she is not in a smoking cessation program and that she has 4-5 good days in a week. Claimant testified that on

a typical day she takes her medications, relaxes if she has a headache, crochets and watches television.

A September 14, 2012 mental status evaluation indicates the claimant was diagnosed with major depression disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and panic disorder without agoraphobia. Current axis V GAF was 51. The prognosis was judged to be good. The efficacy of claimant's current psychotropic medication should be evaluated and monitored by the prescribing physician. In regard to mental status, current symptom severity is not judged to preclude claimant from employment at this time. Medical/physical issues should be evaluation. Claimant is able to manage her benefit funds (p 32-33). Claimant was pleasant and cooperative and her intelligence appeared average. No psychotic intrusion was observed during the interview. Her stream of mental activity was spontaneous and organized. Hallucinations and delusions were explored with claimant and denied. She was friendly yet depressed. She was oriented to person, place and time (p 31). An August 16, 2012 medical examination report indicates the claimant is 5'2" tall and weighed 134 lbs. Her blood pressure was 154/85, temperature 98°, pulse ox 97% on room air. Her pain scale score was 4/10. She was well developed. Her eyes had no injection. PERRLA. Her ears were unremarkable to inspection. Canal was normal in caliber, no excessive cerumen, no drainage. Normal tympanic membrane. The nose was unremarkable. The oropharynx had no pharyngeal erythema or exudates or mucosal lesion. The neck inspection revealed symmetry. Palpation revealed trachea midline and mobile. No thyromegaly or thyroid nodules detected. The lymphatic had no cervical or supraclavicular adenopathy. The chest was symmetric. Lungs were clear to auscultation. Respiratory effort was normal. Cardiovascular area had regular rate and rhythm. No murmurs, gallops or rubs (p 12-13). There was no abdominal tenderness. The right knee had tenderness and the left knee had tenderness. There was no edema present. The memory was intact with no sensory loss. The patient was oriented to time, place person and situation. The patient had normal insight, exhibits normal judgment. The patient demonstrated the appropriate mood and affect. The assessment was hypothyroidism, hypertension and tobacco abuse (p 14). A January 15, 2013 Physical Capacities Assessment was submitted with diagnoses of depression, chronic pain, COPD, and hypothyroidism. With the ability to sometimes sit for 1-2 hours in an 8 hour workday; stand for 1-2 hours in an 8 hour workday, lift up to 10 lbs and bend. Claimant has been limited in these activities since April 25, 2012. The physical capacities assessment indicates the claimant would have serious limitations as to pace and concentration, she would need a sit-stand option as symptoms dictate at will, she would likely miss 3 or more days of work and be tardy 3 or more days per month, the claimant is best suited for part time work as opposed to full time work, she would need breaks as symptoms dictate, the combined effect of these impairments on the patient's activities is greater than the effect of each impairment considered separately, and the patient experiences bouts of incapacitating migraine headaches (p 38-39). This Administrative Law Judge did not send the additional medical information to the State Hearing Review Team as there was no new clinical information provided and the physical capacities assessment was considered as part of the evidence.

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 her 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 herself from tasks associated with occupational functioning based upon her 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.

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 her burden of proof at Step 2. Claimant must be denied benefits at this step based upon her 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 she 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 her again at Step 4 based upon her ability to perform her 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 she has engaged in, in the past. Therefore, if claimant had not already been denied at Step 2, she 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 her 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 she lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in her prior employment or that she is physically unable to do light or sedentary tasks if demanded of her. Claimant's activities of daily living do not appear to be very limited and she should be able to perform light or sedentary work even with her impairments. Claimant has failed to provide the necessary objective medical evidence to establish that she has a severe impairment or combination of impairments which prevent her from performing any level of work for a period of 12 months. The claimant's testimony as to her limitations indicates that she 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

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 receipt 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

LYL/las

cc:

