

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 2013-19651
Issue No.: 2009; 4031
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: April 23, 2013
County: Oakland-04

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 April 23, 2013, from Lansing, Michigan. Claimant personally appeared and testified. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included Eligibility Specialist [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ISSUE

Whether the Department of Human Services (the department) properly denied Claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA-P), Retro-MA 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 September 4, 2012, Claimant filed an application for MA-P, Retro-MA and SDA benefits alleging disability.
- (2) On November 29, 2012, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied Claimant's application for MA-P and Retro-MA indicating that she was capable of performing other work based on her non severe impairment. SDA was denied due to lack of duration. (Dept Ex. A, pp 18-19).
- (3) On December 18, 2012, the department caseworker sent Claimant notice that her application was denied.
- (4) On December 26, 2012, Claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.

- (5) On February 12, 2013, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) found Claimant was not disabled and retained the ability to perform unskilled work. (Depart Ex. B, pp 1-2).
- (6) Claimant has a history of shortness of breath, asthma, neuropathy, sleep apnea, fibromyalgia, tendonitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, sarcoidosis, hypertension, arthritis, hypothyroidism, post traumatic stress syndrome, insomnia, and angina.
- (7) On May 11, 2012, Claimant had a psychological evaluation by the [REDACTED]. Claimant has a long-term history of medical difficulties, however, her depressive symptoms began in 2009 after the death of her husband. Diagnosis: Axis I: Major depressive disorder; Axis V: GAF=48. (Depart Ex. A, pp 27-31).
- (8) On May 19, 2012, Claimant underwent a medical evaluation by the [REDACTED]. Claimant was diagnosed with fibromyalgia 10 years ago. She states the pain is present almost all the time. She states she has difficulty walking greater than 10 minutes, sitting greater than 10 minutes, or bending over. She was diagnosed with low back pain 25 years ago. The pain occasionally radiates into the right lower extremity. The pain is worsened with sitting longer than 10 minutes, walking more than 10 minutes, and standing longer than 10 minutes. The pain is worse with being over and lifting more than 10 pounds. She was diagnosed with asthma 20 years ago and experiences daily shortness of breath and wheezing which nearly completely resolves with her Advair and Albuterol inhalers. She does have a daily dry cough and a history of sleep apnea and sarcoidosis. She was diagnosed with carpal tunnel syndrome 25 years ago and experiences daily numbness, tingling, and aching in the left greater than the right hand and in a radial distribution. She cannot lift greater than 10 pounds and has difficulty picking up a coin or buttoning buttons. Regarding her blood pressure, today it was at the upper range of normal. She states that she occasionally has chest pain radiating into the bilateral upper extremities when walking greater than 10 minutes which improves with rest. The lumbosacral spine x-ray showed artifacts and mild spur formations, best seen at L5-S1 level I with evidence of disc space narrowing at L5-S1. She also had mild exaggeration of lumbar lordosis with minimal dextroscoliosis. (Depart Ex. A, pp 20-24).
- (9) On October 16, 2012, Claimant's treating physician completed a medical examination of Claimant. Claimant was diagnosed with hypertension, asthma, hyperlipidemia, depression, fatigue, GERD, insomnia, shortness of breath, wheezing, and vomiting. Claimant cried throughout the examination. She had chest tightness and uncontrolled blood pressure. She had a tremor in her upper

extremities. She was very depressed and suffered from insomnia. The treating physician opined that Claimant's condition was deteriorating and she was unable to meet her needs in the home and needed assistance with housework and with household chores. (Depart Ex. A, pp 43-44).

- (10) On October 24, 2012, Claimant's treating chiropractor completed a medical examination of Claimant. Claimant is diagnosed with chronic back, shoulder and hand pain. She had muscle spasms in her hip region, an antalgic gait, positive straight leg raise and a positive compression test of her cervical spine. She was depressed and unable to meet her needs in her home, requiring assistance with household chores. The treating chiropractor opined that Claimant's condition was deteriorating. (Depart Ex. A, pp 41-42).
- (11) Claimant is a 57 year old woman whose birthday is [REDACTED]. Claimant is 5'4" tall and weighs 170 lbs. Claimant completed two years of college.
- (12) Claimant was appealing the denial of Social Security disability benefits at the time of the hearing.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by Subchapter XIX of Chapter 7 of The Public Health & Welfare Act, 42 USC 1397, and is administered by the Department, (DHS or department), 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 Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

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.

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). The person claiming a physical or mental disability has the burden to establish it through the use of competent medical evidence from qualified medical sources such as his or her medical history, clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescribed treatment, prognosis for recovery and/or medical assessment of ability to do work-related activities or ability to reason and make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is alleged. 20 CFR 413.913. An individual's subjective pain complaints are not, in and of themselves, sufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.908; 20 CFR 416.929(a). Similarly, conclusory statements by a physician or mental health professional that an individual is disabled or blind, absent supporting medical evidence, is insufficient to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.927.

When determining disability, the federal regulations require several factors to be considered including: (1) the location/duration/frequency/intensity of an applicant's pain; (2) the type/dosage/effectiveness/side effects of any medication the applicant takes to relieve pain; (3) any treatment other than pain medication that the applicant has received to relieve pain; and, (4) the effect of the applicant's pain on his or her ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(3). The applicant's pain must be assessed to determine the extent of his or her functional limitation(s) in light of the objective medical evidence presented. 20 CFR 416.929(c)(2).

In order to determine whether or not an individual is disabled, federal regulations require a five-step sequential evaluation process be utilized. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(1). The five-step analysis requires the trier of fact to consider an individual's current work activity; the severity of the impairment(s) both in duration and whether it meets or equals a listed impairment in Appendix 1; residual functional capacity to determine whether an individual can perform past relevant work; and residual functional capacity along with vocational factors (e.g., age, education, and work experience) to determine if an individual can adjust to other work. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945.

If an individual is found disabled, or not disabled, at any step, a determination or decision is made with no need to evaluate subsequent steps. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4). If a determination cannot be made that an individual is disabled, or not disabled, at a particular step, the next step is required. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4).

In Claimant's case, the ongoing and unpredictable seizures, and other non-exertional symptoms he describes are consistent with the objective medical evidence presented. Consequently, great weight and credibility must be given to his testimony in this regard.

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).

Claimant has not been employed since December, 2008; consequently, the analysis must move to Step 2.

In this case, Claimant has presented the required medical data and evidence necessary to support a finding that Claimant has significant physical and mental limitations upon his ability to perform basic work activities.

Medical evidence has clearly established that Claimant has an impairment (or combination of impairments) that has more than a minimal effect on Claimant's work activities. See Social Security Rulings 85-28, 88-13, and 82-63.

In the third step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment (or combination of impairments) is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the claimant's medical record will not support a finding that claimant's impairment(s) is a "listed impairment" or equal to a listed impairment. See Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404, Part A. Accordingly, Claimant cannot be found to be disabled based upon medical evidence alone. 20 CFR 416.920(d).

In the fourth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment(s) prevents claimant from doing past relevant work. 20 CFR 416.920(e). It is the finding of this Administrative Law Judge, based upon the medical evidence and objective medical findings, that Claimant cannot return to her past relevant work because the rigors of working as a hostess are completely outside the scope of her physical and mental abilities given the medical evidence presented.

In the fifth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the claimant's impairment(s) prevents claimant from doing other work. 20 CFR 416.920(f). This determination is based upon the claimant's:

- (1) residual functional capacity defined simply as "what can you still do despite your limitations?" 20 CFR 416.945;
- (2) age, education, and work experience, 20 CFR 416.963-.965; and
- (3) the kinds of work which exist in significant numbers in the national economy which the claimant could perform despite his/her limitations. 20 CFR 416.966.

See *Felton v DSS* 161 Mich. App 690, 696 (1987). Once Claimant reaches Step 5 in the sequential review process, Claimant has already established a *prima facie* case of disability. *Richardson v Secretary of Health and Human Services*, 735 F2d 962 (6th Cir, 1984). At that point, the burden of proof is on the state to prove by substantial evidence that Claimant has the residual functional capacity for substantial gainful activity.

Claimant's treating psychiatrist and her chiropractor both completed medical evaluations and both noted that Claimant was unable to meet her own needs in her home, based on her impairments. In addition, they both opined that her condition was deteriorating.

20 CFR 404.1527(d)(2) states that a treating source opinion is given controlling weight if said opinion is supported by well supported by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques and is not inconsistent with the other objective medical evidence on the record. As such, this Administrative Law Judge gives great weight to the opinions of Claimant's treating physician and chiropractor and finds that said opinions are not contradicted by the objective medical evidence contained in the record and are supported by acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques.

Therefore, this Administrative Law Judge finds that Claimant's exertional and non-exertional impairments render Claimant unable to engage in a full range of even sedentary work activities on a regular and continuing basis. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 11, Section 201.00(h). See Social Security Ruling 83-10; *Wilson v Heckler*, 743 F2d 216 (1986). Based on Claimant's vocational profile (advanced age, Claimant is 57, an associate of arts degree and an unskilled work history), this Administrative Law Judge finds Claimant's MA, Retro/MA and SDA are approved using Vocational Rule 201.04 as a guide. Consequently, the department's denial of her September 4, 2012, MA/Retro-MA and SDA application cannot be upheld.

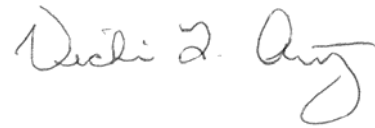
DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the department erred in determining Claimant is not currently disabled for MA/Retro-MA and SDA eligibility purposes.

Accordingly, the department's decision is **REVERSED**, and it is ORDERED that:

1. The department shall process Claimant's September 4, 2012, MA/Retro-MA and SDA application, and shall award her all the benefits she may be entitled to receive, as long as she meets the remaining financial and non-financial eligibility factors.
2. The department shall review Claimant's medical condition for improvement in May, 2014, unless her Social Security Administration disability status is approved by that time.
3. The department shall obtain updated medical evidence from Claimant's treating physicians, physical therapists, pain clinic notes, etc. regarding her continued treatment, progress and prognosis at review.

It is SO ORDERED.



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

Date Signed: April 23, 2013

Date Mailed: April 23, 2013

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

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VLA/las

cc:

