

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 201368186  
Issue No(s): 2009  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: January 29, 2014  
County: Antrim

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Carmen G. Fahie

**HEARING DECISION**

Following Claimant's request for a hearing, this matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MC L 400.9 and 400.37; 42 CFR 431.200 to 431.250; and 45 CFR 205.10. After due notice, telephone hearing was held on Wednesday, January 29, 2014, from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included the Claimant and his sister, [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED], GSPM and [REDACTED], ES.

**ISSUE**

Whether the Department properly determined that Claimant was not disabled for purposes of the Medical Assistance (MA)?

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

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

1. On July 9, 2013, the Claimant applied for MA-P with Retro MA to June 2013.
2. On August 27, 2013, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied the Claimant's application for MA-P stating that the Claimant's impairment lacked duration of 12 months per 20 CFR 416.909.
3. On August 28, 2013, the Department Caseworker sent the Claimant a notice that his application was denied.
4. On September 11, 2013, the Department received a hearing request from the Claimant, contesting the Department's negative action.

5. On October 23, 2013, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) considered the submitted objective medical evidence in making its determination of MA-P and retroactive MA-P for the Claimant. The Claimant is 51 years old with a 11<sup>th</sup> grade high school education and a history of semi-skilled work. He alleges disability due to fractured neck and right foot sprain. The Claimant sustained a neck fracture on [REDACTED]. The fracture is expected to heal within 12 months from the date of injury. The Claimant is not currently engaged in substantial gainful activity (SGA) based on the information in the file. The Claimant's impairments do not meet/equal the intent or severity of a Social Security listing. The medical evidence on the record indicates that the Claimant retains the capacity to perform a wide range of light work. Therefore, based on the Claimant's vocational profile (approaching advanced age individual, 11<sup>th</sup> grade education, and history of light work), MA-P is denied using Vocational Rule 202.11 as a guide. Retroactive MA-P was considered in this case and is also denied at Step 5 of the sequential evaluation where the Claimant retains the capacity to perform light work.
6. The Claimant is a 51 year-old man whose date of birth is [REDACTED]. The Claimant is 6' 3½" tall and weighs 225 pounds. The Claimant has completed 11<sup>th</sup> grade of High School. The Claimant can read, write and perform basic math. The Claimant was last employed as a pick-up truck driver with a [REDACTED] license in April 2006 at the heavy level. The Claimant has also been employed as a construction worker building residential houses at the heavy level.
7. The Claimant's alleged impairments are the result of a motorcycle accident on [REDACTED], resulting in a severe ankle sprain and nerve damage, pain in the neck, and a fracture of C6 in 2 places.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by the Title XIX of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396-1396w-5, and is implemented by 42 CFR 400.200 to 1008.59. The Department of Human Services (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the MA program pursuant to MCL 400.10 and MCL 400.105.

"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.

...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.

...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).

...[The impairment]...must have lasted or must be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months. We call this the duration requirement. 20 CFR 416.909.

...If you do not have any impairment or combination of impairments which significantly limits your physical or mental ability to do basic work activities, we will find that you do not have a severe impairment and are, therefore, not disabled.

We will not consider your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(c).

[In reviewing your impairment]...We need reports about your impairments from acceptable medical sources.... 20 CFR 416.913(a).

...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).

...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).

... [The record must show a severe impairment] which significantly limits your physical or mental ability to do basic work activities.... 20 CFR 416.920(c).

...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).

...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 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).

...Evidence that you submit or that we obtain 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 your impairment(s), including your symptoms, diagnosis and prognosis, what you can still do despite impairment(s), and your physical or mental restrictions. 20 CFR 416.927(a)(2).

...In deciding whether you are disabled, we will always consider the medical opinions in your case record together with the rest of the relevant evidence we receive. 20 CFR 416.927(b).

After we review all of the evidence relevant to your claim, including medical opinions, we make findings about what the evidence shows. 20 CFR 416.927(c).

...If all of the evidence we receive, including a medical opinion(s), is consistent, and there is sufficient evidence for us to decide whether you are disabled, we will make our determination or decision based on that evidence. 20 CFR 416.927(c)(1).

...If any of the evidence in your case record, including any medical opinion(s), is inconsistent with other evidence or is internally inconsistent, we will weigh all of the evidence and see whether we can decide whether you are disabled based on the evidence we have. 20 CFR 416.927(c)(2).

[As Judge]...We are responsible for making the determination or decision about whether you meet the statutory definition of disability. In so doing, we review all of the medical findings and other evidence that support a medical source's statement that you are disabled.... 20 CFR 416.927(e).

...A statement by a medical source that you are "disabled" or "unable to work" does not mean that we will determine that you are disabled. 20 CFR 416.927(e).

...If you have an impairment(s) which meets the duration requirement and is listed in Appendix 1 or is equal to a listed impairment(s), we will find you disabled without considering your age, education, and work experience. 20 CFR 416.920(d).

...If we cannot make a decision on your current work activities or medical facts alone and you have a severe impairment, we will then review your residual functional capacity and the physical and mental demands of the work you have done in the past. If you can still do this kind of work, we will find that you are not disabled. 20 CFR 416.920(e).

If you cannot do any work you have done in the past because you have a severe impairment(s), we will consider your residual functional capacity and your age, education, and past work experience to see if you can do other work. If you cannot, we will find you disabled. 20 CFR 416.920(f)(1).

...Your residual functional capacity is what you can still do despite limitations. If you have more than one impairment, we will consider all of your impairment(s) of which we are aware. We will consider your ability to meet certain demands of jobs, such as physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements, and other functions, as described in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) of this section. Residual functional capacity is an assessment based on all of the relevant evidence.... 20 CFR 416.945(a).

...This assessment of your remaining capacity for work is not a decision on whether you are disabled, but is used as the basis for determining the particular types of work you may be able to do despite your impairment(s).... 20 CFR 416.945(a).

...In determining whether you are disabled, we will consider all of your symptoms, including pain, and the extent to which your symptoms can reasonably be accepted as consistent with objective medical evidence, and other evidence.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

...In evaluating the intensity and persistence of your symptoms, including pain, we will consider all of the available evidence, including your medical history, the medical signs and laboratory findings and statements about how your symptoms affect you... We will then determine the extent to which your alleged functional limitations or restrictions due to pain or other symptoms can reasonably be accepted as consistent with the medical signs and laboratory findings and other evidence to decide how your symptoms affect your ability to work.... 20 CFR 416.929(a).

If you have more than one impairment, we will consider all of your impairments of which we are aware. We will consider your ability to meet certain demands of jobs, such as physical demands, mental demands, sensory requirements, and other functions as described in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) of this section. Residual functional capacity is an assessment based upon all of the relevant evidence. This assessment of your capacity for work is not a decision on whether you are disabled but is used as a basis for determining the particular types of work you may be able to do despite your impairment. 20 CFR 416.945.

...When we assess your physical abilities, we first assess the nature and extent of your physical limitations and then determine your residual functional capacity for work activity on a regular and continuing basis. A limited ability to perform certain physical demands of work activity, such as sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, or other physical functions (including manipulative or postural functions, such as reaching, handling, stooping or crouching), may reduce your ability to do past work and other work. 20 CFR 416.945(b).

Federal regulations require that the department use the same operative definition for "disabled" as used for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. 42 CFR 435.540(a).

“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

In determining whether an individual is disabled, 20 CFR 416.920 requires the trier of fact to follow a sequential evaluation process by which current work activity, the severity of the impairment(s), residual functional capacity, and vocational factors (i.e., age, education, and work experience) are assessed in that order. When a determination that an individual is or is not disabled can be made at any step in the sequential evaluation, evaluation under a subsequent step is not necessary.

#### Step 1

First, the trier of fact must determine if the individual is working and if the work is substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.920(b). At Step 1, the Claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity and has not worked since April 2006. Therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

#### Step 2

Secondly, in order to be considered disabled for purposes of MA, a person must have a severe impairment. 20 CFR 416.920(c). A severe impairment is an impairment which significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities. Basic work activities means, 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).



The purpose of the second step in the sequential evaluation process is to screen out claims lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v. Bowen* 880 F2d 860, 862 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir, 1988). As a result, the department may only screen out claims at this level which are "totally groundless" solely from a medical standpoint. The *Higgs* court used the severity requirement as a "*de minimus* hurdle" in the disability determination. The *de minimus* standard is a provision of a law that allows the court to disregard trifling matters.

The objective medical evidence on the record further substantiates the Administrative Law Judge's findings. On [REDACTED], the Claimant was hospitalized at [REDACTED] as the result of a motorcycle accident. He was released on [REDACTED]. The Claimant was diagnosed with a small, intra-ventricular subdural hematoma, a non-displaced fracture to the posterior element of C6, right sided pneumothorax status post chest tube placement, right rib fracture, left lower lip laceration status post closure, right ankle sprain, and blood loss anemia. The Claimant was listed at a level 2 trauma patient. The Claimant appeared neurologically intact. His treating physician recommended a Vista collar until the pain resolved in his neck in 4 to 6 weeks. Subsequent follow-up chest x-rays did not show any worsening of the pneumothorax when compared to other studies. The Claimant was discharged in stable condition. He was to continue with the C-collar at all times. He was to use an incentive spirometer and do breathing exercises. The Claimant was also advised to do chest dressing, which overlies the chest tube insertion site tomorrow after discharge. He was to use a walker for assistance or crutches until more comfortable weight bearing on the right foot. The Claimant also had a right fracture boot for the right lower extremity when bearing weight. Department Exhibit 64-66.

On [REDACTED], the Claimant was seen by his treating physician. His treating physician stated that the Claimant had a C6 fracture, cerebro-vascular hemorrhage, and a severe sprain of the right ankle/foot. Treatment would only be required for 9 to 12 months. The Claimant could work his usual occupation in 9 months to 1 year. Currently, the Claimant could not lift over 5 pounds, couldn't turn head, or move neck due to fracture of the C6. The Claimant had a cervical and ankle braces. He had some chest pain from rib fracture. He had some sensory loss in the right foot with some neck pain and radiation down the left arm. Mentally, the Claimant did not have any impairment. The Claimant was stable with limitations that were expected to last more than 90 days. He could occasionally lift 10 pounds, but never 20 pounds. He could stand and/or walk less than 2 hours of an 8 hour workday. He could sit about 6 hours in an 8 hour workday. The Claimant could use both hands/arm for simple grasping and reaching, but not pushing/pulling. He could use the right arm/hand for fine manipulation. He could use his left foot/leg for operating foot/leg controls. The Claimant could not meet his needs in the home. Department Exhibit 69-70 and 74-76.

On [REDACTED], the Claimant was seen by his treating orthopedic specialist. His treating physician stated that the Claimant had a right medial and lateral ankle sprain and right peripheral neuropathy. Treatment would only be required for 3 months. The Claimant could work his usual occupation or any job on September 4, 2013. Currently, the Claimant could use a cane or crutches for support secondary to a foot/ankle injury.

Mentally, the Claimant did not have any impairment. The Claimant was stable with limitations that were expected to last until September 4, 2013. The Claimant could meet his needs in the home. Department Exhibit 18-20 and 21-22.

On [REDACTED], the Claimant was seen at [REDACTED] as a follow-up. His chief complaint was pain. The Claimant had a normal physical examination, but still active problems of cerebromeningeal hemorrhage, closed cervical fracture at the C5-C7 level with a complete cord lesion, fracture of the ankle, peripheral neuropathy, and traumatic pneumothorax. The Claimant's gait and station was abnormal. In addition, the Claimant had mild strength loss in the right hand and foot. Department Exhibit c-e.

At Step 2, the objective medical evidence in the record indicates that the Claimant has not established that he has a severe impairment. The Claimant had a motorcycle accident on [REDACTED]. He was treated and released from the hospital in stable condition. His follow-up showed that the Claimant's impairment was not expected to last 12 months. One physician stated he should recover in 3 months, which was reiterated by his other specialist who said he should be able to work as of September 4, 2013. The Claimant has no mental impairment. The Claimant is capable of performing at least light work. Therefore, the Claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 2. However, this Administrative Law Judge will proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine disability because Step 2 is a *de minimus* standard.

### Step 3

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, the Claimant cannot be found to be disabled based upon medical evidence alone. 20 CFR 416.920(d). This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant's impairments do not rise to the level necessary to be listed as disabling by law. Therefore, the Claimant is disqualified from receiving disability at Step 3.

### Step 4

Can the client do the former work that he performed within the last 15 years? If yes, the client is not disabled.

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, physical and psychological findings that the Claimant testified that he does perform most of his daily living activities. The Claimant does not feel that his condition has worsened because he is better than he

was in [REDACTED]. The Claimant stated that he has no mental impairments. The Claimant does not smoke or has never smoked. He does drink moderately. He stopped smoking marijuana years ago. The Claimant did not feel there was any work he could do.

At Step 4, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant has established that he cannot perform any of his prior work. His past employment was as a pick-up truck driver with a chauffeur's license in April 2006 at the heavy level. The Claimant has also been employed as a construction worker building residential houses at the heavy level. The Claimant is impaired with his right hand and foot, which would make heavy work difficult. The Claimant is capable of performing light work. Therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 4. However, the Administrative Law Judge will still proceed through the sequential evaluation process to determine whether or not the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his prior jobs.

#### Step 5

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.

...To determine the physical exertion requirements of work in the national economy, we classify jobs as sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very 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).

...To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, you must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. If someone can do light work, we determine that he or she can also do sedentary work, unless there are additional limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. 20 CFR 416.967(b).

**Medium work.** Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. If someone can do medium work, we determine that he or she can also do sedentary and light work. 20 CFR 416.967(c).

**Unskilled work.** Unskilled work is work which needs little or no judgment to do simple duties that can be learned on the job in a short period of time. The job may or may not require considerable strength.... 20 CFR 416.968(a).

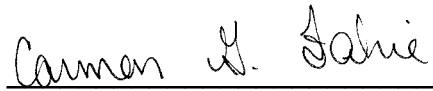
The objective medical evidence on the record is sufficient that the Claimant lacks the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in his previous employment or that he is physically unable to do any tasks demanded of him. The Claimant's testimony as to his limitation indicates his limitations are exertional.

At Step 5, the Claimant can meet the physical requirements of light work, based upon the Claimant's physical abilities. Under the Medical-Vocational guidelines, approaching advanced age individual, 11<sup>th</sup> grade education, and history of heavy work history, who is limited to light work, is not considered disabled. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Rule 202.10. Using the Medical-Vocational guidelines as a framework for making this decision and after giving full consideration to the Claimant's physical impairments, the Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant could perform light work and that the Claimant does not meet the definition of disabled under the MA program.

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, finds Claimant not disabled for purposes of the MA benefit program.

**DECISION AND ORDER**

Accordingly, the Department's determination is AFFIRMED.



**Carmen G. Fahie**  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Maura Corrigan, Director  
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: February 21, 2014

Date Mailed: February 21, 2014

**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.

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

Attention: MAHS Rehearing/Reconsideration Request

201368186/CGF

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

CGF/aca

cc:

