

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 2013-64978
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: February 27, 2014
County: Wayne (49)

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Christian Gardocki

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; 7 CFR 273.15 to 273.18; 42 CFR 431.200 to 431.250; 45 CFR 99.1 to 99.33; and 45 CFR 205.10. After due notice, an in-person hearing was held on February 27, 2014, from Detroit, Michigan. Participants included the above-named Claimant, [REDACTED], Claimant's daughter, testified on behalf of Claimant. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (DHS) included [REDACTED], Medical Contact Worker.

ISSUE

The issue is whether DHS properly denied Claimant's application for Medical Assistance (MA) for the reason that Claimant is not a disabled individual.

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 [REDACTED], Claimant was found disabled by the Social Security Administration (SSA) and deemed eligible to receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits (see Exhibits A1-A8).
2. On an unspecified date, Claimant was ineligible for SSI benefits due to non-disability reasons.

3. On [REDACTED], Claimant applied for MA benefits, including retroactive MA benefits from 2/2013.
4. Claimant's only basis for MA benefits was as a disabled individual.
5. On [REDACTED], the Medical Review Team (MRT) determined that Claimant was not a disabled individual (see Exhibits 5-6).
6. On [REDACTED], DHS denied Claimant's application for MA benefits and mailed a Notice of Case Action informing Claimant of the denial (see Exhibits 3-4).
7. On [REDACTED] Claimant requested a hearing disputing the denial of MA benefits.
8. On [REDACTED], SHRT determined that Claimant was not a disabled individual, in part, by determining that Claimant did not have a severe impairment.
9. On [REDACTED], SSA determined Claimant was eligible for SSI benefits, effective 10/2013 (see Exhibits A9-A10).
10. As of the date of the administrative hearing, Claimant was a 60-year-old female with a height of 5'6" and weight of 400 pounds.
11. Claimant has no known relevant history of alcohol or illegal substance abuse.
12. Claimant's highest education year completed was the 12th grade.
13. As of the date of the administrative hearing, Claimant had no health insurance.
14. Claimant alleged disability based on impairments and issues including panic attacks, scoliosis, neuropathy, hyperlipidemia, swollen legs, chronic pancreatitis, Crohn's disease and torn rotator cuffs.

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. Department policies are contained in the Department of Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) and Department of Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) and Department of Human Services Reference Tables Manual (RFT).

Prior to a substantive analysis of Claimant's hearing request, it should be noted that Claimant noted special arrangements in order to participate in the hearing. Claimant's hearing request noted that she has a walker and high chair which she will require during

the hearing. Claimant testified that she might need to take medications and use a breathing machine during the hearing. Claimant also expressed concerns that an ambulance may need to be called during the hearing. Claimant was advised that she could use her high chair, walker, medications and breathing machine during the hearing, if necessary. Claimant was also advised that she could request an adjournment if she felt unable to proceed with the hearing. Claimant stated that she could proceed with the hearing and stated that the accommodations were acceptable.

The Medicaid program is comprised of several sub-programs which fall under one of two categories; one category is FIP-related and the second category is SSI-related. BEM 105 (10/2010), p. 1. To receive MA under an SSI-related category, the person must be aged (65 or older), blind, disabled, entitled to Medicare or formerly blind or disabled. *Id.* Families with dependent children, caretaker relatives of dependent children, persons under age 21 and pregnant, or recently pregnant, women receive MA under FIP-related categories. *Id.* AMP is an MA program available to persons not eligible for Medicaid through the SSI-related or FIP-related categories though DHS does always offer the program to applicants. It was not disputed that Claimant's only potential category for Medicaid eligibility would be as a disabled individual.

Disability for purposes of MA benefits is established if one of the following circumstances applies:

- by death (for the month of death);
- the applicant receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits;
- SSI benefits were recently terminated due to financial factors;
- the applicant receives Retirement Survivors and Disability Insurance (RSDI) on the basis of being disabled; or
- RSDI eligibility is established following denial of the MA benefit application (under certain circumstances).

BEM 260 (7/2012) pp. 1-2

Claimant presented an SSI award letter (Exhibits 9-10) dated [REDACTED]. The letter verified that Claimant was eligible for SSI benefits beginning 10/2013. Claimant's recent SSI approval entitles Claimant to Medicaid eligibility from 10/2013. It is found that DHS improperly denied Claimant's Medicaid eligibility from 10/2013.

Claimant's award letter failed to address Claimant's SSI eligibility from 2/2013 (the first month of retroactive MA requested) and 9/2013 (the last month where Claimant was not approved for SSI benefits). Thus, a disability analysis must proceed to address Claimant's Medicaid eligibility from 2/2013-9/2013.

Generally, state agencies such as DHS must use the same definition of SSI disability as found in the federal regulations. 42 CFR 435.540(a). Disability is federally defined as the inability to do any substantial gainful activity (SGA) 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 functionally identical definition of disability is found under DHS regulations. BEM 260 (7/2012), p. 8.

Substantial gainful activity means a person does the following:

- Performs significant duties, and
- Does them for a reasonable length of time, and
- Does a job normally done for pay or profit. *Id.* at 9.

Significant duties are duties used to do a job or run a business. *Id.* They must also have a degree of economic value. *Id.* The ability to run a household or take care of oneself does not, on its own, constitute substantial gainful activity. *Id.*

The person claiming a physical or mental disability has the burden to establish a disability 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).

Federal regulations describe a sequential five step process that is to be followed in determining whether a person is disabled. 20 CFR 416.920. If there is no finding of disability or lack of disability at each step, the process moves to the next step. 20 CFR 416.920 (a)(4).

The first step in the process considers a person's current work activity. 20 CFR 416.920 (a)(4)(i). A person who is earning more than a certain monthly amount is ordinarily considered to be engaging in SGA. The monthly amount depends on whether a person is statutorily blind or not. The 2013 monthly income limit considered SGA for non-blind individuals is \$1,040.

Claimant denied performing any employment since the date of the MA application; no evidence was submitted to contradict Claimant's testimony. Without ongoing employment, it can only be concluded that Claimant is not performing SGA. It is found that Claimant is not performing SGA; accordingly, the disability analysis may proceed to step two.

The second step in the disability evaluation is to determine whether a severe medically determinable physical or mental impairment exists to meet the 12 month duration requirement. 20 CFR 416.920 (a)(4)(ii). The impairments may be combined to meet the severity requirement. If a severe impairment is not found, then a person is deemed not disabled. *Id.*

The impairments must significantly limit a person's basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.920 (a)(5)(c). "Basic work activities" refers to the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. *Id.* Examples of basic work activities include:

- physical functions (e.g. walking, standing, sitting, lifting, pushing, pulling, reaching, carrying, or handling)
- capacities for seeing, hearing, and speaking, understanding; carrying out, and remembering simple instructions
- use of judgment
- responding appropriately to supervision, co-workers and usual work situations; and/or
- dealing with changes in a routine work setting.

Generally, federal courts have imposed a de minimus standard upon claimants to establish the existence of a severe impairment. *Grogan v. Barnhart*, 399 F.3d 1257, 1263 (10th Cir. 2005); *Hinkle v. Apfel*, 132 F.3d 1349, 1352 (10th Cir. 1997). *Higgs v Bowen*, 880 F.2d 860, 862 (6th Cir. 1988). Similarly, Social Security Ruling 85-28 has been interpreted so that a claim may be denied at step two for lack of a severe impairment only when the medical evidence establishes a slight abnormality or combination of slight abnormalities that would have no more than a minimal effect on an individual's ability to work even if the individual's age, education, or work experience were specifically considered. *Barrientos v. Secretary of Health and Human Servs.*, 820 F.2d 1, 2 (1st Cir. 1987). Social Security Ruling 85-28 has been clarified so that the step two severity requirement is intended "to do no more than screen out groundless claims." *McDonald v. Secretary of Health and Human Servs.*, 795 F.2d 1118, 1124 (1st Cir. 1986).

SSA specifically notes that age, education, and work experience are not considered at the second step of the disability analysis. 20 CFR 416.920 (5)(c). In determining whether Claimant's impairments amount to a severe impairment, all other relevant evidence may be considered. The analysis will begin with a summary of the relevant submitted medical documentation.

Hospital documents (Exhibits 20-26) from an encounter dated [REDACTED] were presented. It was noted that Claimant presented with a primary complaint of abdominal pain. A history of stroke was noted. Diagnoses of gastritis and a urinary tract infection were noted. A discharge date on Claimant's date of admission as noted.

Hospital documents (Exhibits 13-19) from an admission dated [REDACTED] were presented. It was noted that Claimant presented with complaints of headaches, dizziness, nausea and chest pain. It was noted that Claimant was positive for edema, nausea, headache and dizziness. A surgical history of cholecystectomy, hernia repair and myomectomy was noted. Discharge diagnoses included the following: resolved atypical chest pain, better controlled HTN, DM, hyperlipidemia, GERD and obesity. A discharge date of 5/1/13 was noted.

Claimant did not present compelling medical evidence of disability but two hospital encounters were verified. Typically, the evidence would be insufficient to establish a severe impairment, however, Claimant verified that the encounters were sandwiched by SSI approvals.

A favorable administrative hearing decision (Exhibits A1-A8) dated [REDACTED] was presented. The decision noted that Claimant had various problems which included: GERD, coronary artery disease, HTN, walking difficulties requiring cane ambulation, diminished right hand grip strength, reduced lumbar range of motion, and a history of 4 hernia surgeries including recurrent right-side hernia.

Between, the presented medical evidence, SSI approvals and findings within the favorable SSA hearing decision, it is found that Claimant has multiple impairments affecting her ability to ambulate which have lasted at least since 2/2013. It is found that Claimant has severe impairments and the disability analysis may move to step three.

The third step of the sequential analysis requires a determination whether the Claimant's impairment, or combination of impairments, is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. 20 CFR 416.920 (a)(4)(iii). If Claimant's impairments are listed and deemed to meet the 12 month requirement, then the claimant is deemed disabled. If the impairment is unlisted, then the analysis proceeds to the next step.

Claimant alleged multiple problems, which justify consideration of several SSA listings. Claimant failed to present evidence to support a finding that Claimant meets any particular listing. It is found that Claimant failed to establish meeting a SSA listing. Accordingly, the analysis moves to step four.

The fourth step in analyzing a disability claim requires an assessment of the Claimant's residual functional capacity (RFC) and past relevant employment. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4)(iv). An individual is not disabled if it is determined that a claimant can perform past relevant work. *Id.*

Past relevant work is work that has been performed within the past 15 years that was a substantial gainful activity and that lasted long enough for the individual to learn the position. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(1). Vocational factors of age, education, and work experience, and whether the past relevant employment exists in significant numbers in the national economy is not considered. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3). RFC is assessed based on impairment(s), and any related symptoms, such as pain, which may cause physical and mental limitations that affect what can be done in a work setting. RFC is the most that can be done, despite the limitations.

Claimant testified that she has zero work history from the last 15 years. Without any past relevant employment, it can only be found that Claimant cannot return to performing past relevant employment and the analysis may proceed to step five.

In the fifth step in the process, the individual's RFC in conjunction with his or her age, education, and work experience, are considered to determine whether the individual can engage in any other substantial gainful work which exists in the national economy. SSR 83-10. While a vocational expert is not required, a finding supported by substantial evidence that the individual has the vocational qualifications to perform specific jobs is

needed to meet the burden. *O'Banner v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 587 F2d 321, 323 (CA 6, 1978). Medical-Vocational guidelines found at 20 CFR Subpart P, Appendix II, may be used to satisfy the burden of proving that the individual can perform specific jobs in the national economy. *Heckler v Campbell*, 461 US 458, 467 (1983); *Kirk v Secretary*, 667 F2d 524, 529 (CA 6, 1981) *cert den* 461 US 957 (1983).

To determine the physical demands (i.e. exertional requirements) of work in the national economy, jobs are classified as sedentary, light, medium, heavy, and very heavy. 20 CFR 416.967. The definitions for each are listed below.

Sedentary work involves lifting of no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. 20 CFR 416.967(a). 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. *Id.* Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met.

Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing up to 10 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(b) Even though 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. *Id.* To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, an individual must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. *Id.* An individual capable of light work is also capable of sedentary work, unless there are additionally limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. *Id.*

Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(c). An individual capable of performing medium work is also capable of light and sedentary work. *Id.*

Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(d). An individual capable of heavy work is also capable of medium, light, and sedentary work. *Id.*

Finally, very heavy work involves lifting objects weighing more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing 50 pounds or more. 20 CFR 416.967(e). An individual capable of very heavy work is able to perform work under all categories. *Id.*

Limitations or restrictions which affect the ability to meet the demands of jobs other than strength demands are considered nonexertional. 20 CFR 416.969a(a). Examples of non-exertional limitations include difficulty functioning due to nervousness, anxiousness, or depression; difficulty maintaining attention or concentration; difficulty understanding or remembering detailed instructions; difficulty in seeing or hearing; difficulty tolerating some physical feature(s) of certain work settings (i.e. can't tolerate dust or fumes); or

difficulty performing the manipulative or postural functions of some work such as reaching, handling, stooping, climbing, crawling, or crouching. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(1)(i)-(vi) If the impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, only affect the ability to perform the non-exertional aspects of work-related activities, the rules in Appendix 2 do not direct factual conclusions of disabled or not disabled. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(2)

The determination of whether disability exists is based upon the principles in the appropriate sections of the regulations, giving consideration to the rules for specific case situations in Appendix 2. *Id.* In using the rules of Appendix 2, an individual's circumstances, as indicated by the findings with respect to RFC, age, education, and work experience, is compared to the pertinent rule(s). Given Claimant's age, education and employment history a determination of disability is dependent on Claimant's ability to perform a medium exertional level of employment.

Claimant testified that she is capable of walking a maximum of one block, and that is with use of her walker. Claimant's testimony is consistent with an inability to perform the ambulation or lifting necessary for medium employment.

The SSA administrative judge who determined Claimant to be eligible for SSI benefits found eligibility based on application of Medical-Vocational Rule 202.06. Medical-Vocational Rule 202.06 is applicable when a trier of fact determines a claimant to be restricted to performing light employment. The administrative judge's decision is not necessarily applicable to 2013, however, in the context of a claimant found disabled only five years later, it is most probable that the same decision applies. It is found that Claimant is limited to performing light employment.

It should be noted that Claimant credibly testified that she was only SSI ineligible since 2008 because of her spouse's income, not because of any improvement in her medical condition. Claimant's testimony is consistent in finding that Claimant is, and has been, disabled since at least 2/2013.

Based on Claimant's exertional work level (light), age (advanced age), education (less than high school), employment history (unskilled), Medical-Vocational Rule 202.04 is found to apply. This rule dictates a finding that Claimant is disabled. Accordingly, it is found that DHS improperly found Claimant to be not disabled for purposes of MA benefits.

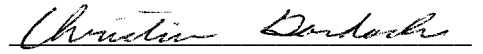
DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law finds that DHS improperly denied Claimant's application for MA benefits. It is ordered that DHS:

- (1) reinstate Claimant's MA benefit application dated [REDACTED] including Claimant's request for retroactive MA benefits;

- (2) evaluate Claimant's eligibility for MA benefits from 2/2013-9/2013 subject to the finding that Claimant is a disabled individual;
- (3) evaluate Claimant's eligibility for MA benefits from 10/2013, subject to the finding that Claimant is Medicaid eligible based on SSI eligibility; and
- (4) initiate a supplement for any benefits not issued as a result of the improper application denial.

The actions taken by DHS are **REVERSED**.


Christian Gardocki
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: 3/21/2014

Date Mailed: 3/21/2014

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

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

CG/hw

cc:

