

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

IN THE MATTER OF:



Reg. No.: 201417013
Issue No.: 2009; 4009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: April 1, 2014
County: Grand Traverse County DHS

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Kevin Scully

HEARING DECISION

Following Claimant's request for a hearing, this matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and 400.37; 42 CFR 431.200 to 431.250; and 45 CFR 205.10. After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on April 1, 2014, from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. During the hearing, Claimant waived the time period for the issuance of this decision in order to allow for the submission of additional medical evidence.

ISSUE

Did the Department of Human Services (Department) properly determine that the Claimant did not meet the disability standard for Medical Assistance (MA-P) based on disability 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 April 17, 2013, the Claimant submitted an application for Medical Assistance (MA) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits alleging disability.
2. On September 6, 2013, the Medical Review Team (MRT) determined that the Claimant did not meet the disability standard for Medical Assistance (MA-P) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) because it determined that she is capable of other work despite her impairments.
3. On September 11, 2013, the Department sent the Claimant notice that it had denied the application for assistance.
4. On December 10, 2013, the Department received the Claimant's hearing request, protesting the denial of disability benefits.

5. On February 10, 2014, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) upheld the Medical Review Team's (MRT) denial of Medical Assistance (MA-P) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits.
6. On April 10, 2014, after reviewing the additional medical records, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) again upheld the determination of the Medical Review Team (MRT) that the Claimant does not meet the disability standard.
7. The Claimant applied for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits at the Social Security Administration (SSA).
8. The Social Security Administration (SSA) denied the Claimant's federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) application and the Claimant reported that a SSI appeal is pending.
9. The Claimant is a 50-year-old woman whose birth date is [REDACTED].
10. Claimant is 5' 7" tall and weighs 162 pounds.
11. The Claimant graduated from high school and nursing school.
12. The Claimant is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
13. The Claimant was not engaged in substantial gainful activity at any time relevant to this matter.
14. The Claimant has past relevant work experience as a nurse where she was required to lift patients and deal with stressful situations such as dealing with the family of patients.
15. The Claimant's disability claim is based on degenerative disc disease, nerve pain, fibromyalgia, migraines, depression, insomnia, and gastroesophageal reflux disease.

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, Rule 400.901 - 400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because her claim for assistance has been denied. Mich Admin Code, R 400.903. 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. Department of Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 600 (July 1, 2013), pp 1-44.

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.

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program, which provides financial assistance for disabled persons, was established by 2004 PA 344. The 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 BAM, BEM, and RFT. A person is considered disabled for SDA purposes if the person has a physical or mental impairment, which meets federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability standards for at least ninety days. Receipt of SSI benefits based on disability or blindness, or the receipt of MA benefits based on disability or blindness, automatically qualifies an individual as disabled for purposes of the SDA program.

Pursuant to Federal Rule 42 CFR 435.540, the Department uses the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) policy in determining eligibility for disability under the Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance (SDA) programs. Under SSI, disability is defined as:

...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.

When determining disability, the federal regulations require that several considerations be analyzed in sequential order.

STEP 1

Does the client perform Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)? If yes, the client is not disabled.

At step 1, a determination is made on whether the Claimant is engaging in substantial gainful activity (20 CFR 404.1520(b) and 416.920(b)). Substantial gainful activity (SGA) is defined as work activity that is both substantial and gainful. "Substantial work activity" is work activity that involves doing significant physical or mental activities (20 CFR 404.1572(a) and 416.972(a)). "Gainful work activity" is work that is usually done for pay or profit, whether or not a profit is realized (20 CFR 404.1572(b) and 416.972(b)). Generally, if an individual has earnings from employment or self-employment above a specific level set out in the regulations, it is presumed that she has demonstrated the ability to engage in SGA (20 CFR 404.1574, 404.1575, 416.974, and 416.975). If an individual engages in SGA, she is not disabled regardless of how severe her physical or mental impairments are and regardless of her age, education, and work experience. If the individual is not engaging in SGA, the analysis proceeds to the second step.

The Claimant testified that has not been employed since October of 2013, and June of 2013, when she unsuccessfully attempted two episodes work. The Claimant testified that she is not currently engaged in substantial gainful activity, which was not disputed by the Department during the hearing. Therefore this Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant is not engaged in substantial gainful activity and is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

STEP 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 not disabled.

At step two, a determination is made whether the Claimant has a medically determinable impairment that is "severe" or a combination of impairments that is "severe" (20 CFR 404.1520(c) and 416.920(c)). An impairment or combination of impairments is "severe" within the meaning of the regulations if it significantly limits an individual's ability to perform basic work activities. An impairment or combination of impairments is "not severe" when medical and other evidence establish only a slight abnormality or a combination of slight abnormalities that would have no more than a minimal effect on an individual's ability to work (20 CFR 404.1521 and 416.921). If the Claimant does not have a severe medically determinable impairment or combination of impairments, she is not disabled. If the Claimant has a severe impairment or combination of impairments, the analysis proceeds to the third step.

The 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, or result in death.

The Claimant is a 50-year-old woman that is 5' 7" tall and weighs 162 pounds. The Claimant alleges disability due to degenerative disc disease, nerve pain, fibromyalgia, migraines, depression, insomnia, and gastroesophageal reflux disease.

The objective medical evidence indicates the following:

A treating physician found the Claimant to have a normal gait, normal posture, normal motor strength, and a straight leg test was negative. Another physician found the Claimant's condition to be improving, that she can lift 10 pounds occasionally, stand for 2 hours, but that she cannot repetitively reach, push, or pull with either hand, and is not capable of operating foot controls.

A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan revealed recurrent disc herniation at the L5-S1 level, and nerve compression at the S1 root. A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan revealed mild degenerative changes at the L3-4 and L4-5 levels, and recurrent disc herniation at the L5-S1 level with greater right than left S1 root compression. A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan revealed left paramedian neural foraminal encroachment secondary to disc bulging at the C3-4 level. A treating physician diagnosed the Claimant with fibromyalgia and right C6 radiculopathy.

The Claimant underwent a right L5-S1 hemilaminectomy redo with redo discectomy at the L5-S1 level. The Claimant underwent radiofrequency denervation of the cervical left C2 through C5 levels with fluoroscopy. The Claimant underwent cervical medial branch block with fluoroscopy at the C2 through C5 levels. The Claimant underwent cervical epidural steroid injection with C-ARM. The Claimant underwent cervical fusion for right upper extremity radiculitis at the C5-6 level.

The Claimant is capable of shopping for groceries, shoveling snow, dusting, and washing laundry. The Claimant is capable of living alone and caring for her personal needs such as showering and dressing herself without assistance.

The evidence on the record indicates that the Claimant's was been diagnosed with degenerative disc disease, fibromyalgia, and nerve pain by treating physicians, which have resulted in significant impairments to sit, stand, and perform repetitive work related tasks. The significant pain reported by the Claimant could be reasonably be expected to arise from the impairments she has been diagnosed with. Therefore, this Administrative Law Judge finds a severe physical impairment that has more than a de minimus effect on the Claimant's ability to perform work activities. The Claimant's impairments have lasted continuously, or are expected to last for twelve months.

STEP 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.

At step three, a determination is made whether the Claimant's impairment or combination of impairments is of a severity to meet or medically equal the criteria of an impairment listed in 20 CFR Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 1 (20 CFR 404.1520(d), 404.1525, 404.1526, 416.920(d), 416.925, and 416.926). If the Claimant's impairment or combination of impairments is of a severity to meet or medically equal the criteria of a listing and meets the duration requirement (20 CFR 404.1509 and 416.909), the Claimant is disabled. If it does not, the analysis proceeds to the next step.

The Claimant's impairment failed to meet the listing for degenerative disc disease, nerve pain, and fibromyalgia under section 1.04 Disorders of the spine, because the objective medical evidence does not demonstrate that the Claimant suffers from nerve root compression resulting in loss of motor strength or reflexes, or resulting in a positive straight leg test. The objective medical evidence does not demonstrate that the Claimant has been diagnosed with spinal arachnoiditis. The objective medical evidence does not support a finding that the Claimant's impairment has resulted in an inability to ambulate effectively. The Claimant was found to have a normal gait and normal posture by her treating physician.

The Claimant's impairment failed to meet the listing for depression under section 12.04 Affective disorders, because the objective medical evidence does not demonstrate that the Claimant suffers from marked restrictions of activities of daily living or social functioning. The objective medical evidence does not demonstrate that the Claimant suffers from repeated episodes of decompensation or is unable to function outside a highly supportive living arrangement.

The Claimant's impairment failed to meet the listing for fibromyalgia or insomnia under section 12.07 Somatoform disorders because the objective medical evidence does not support a finding that the Claimant suffers from marked restrictions of daily living and social functioning, or that she suffers from repeated episodes of decompensation.

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The medical evidence of the Claimant's condition does not give rise to a finding that she would meet a statutory listing in federal code of regulations 20 CFR Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 1.

STEP 4

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

Before considering step four of the sequential evaluation process, a determination is made of the Claimant's residual functional capacity (20 CFR 404.1520(e) and 416.920(c)). An individual's residual functional capacity is her ability to do physical and mental work activities on a sustained basis despite limitations from her impairments. In making this finding, the undersigned must consider all of the Claimant's impairments, including impairments that are not severe (20 CFR 404.1520(e), 404.1545, 416.920(e), and 416.945; SSR 96-8p).

Next, a determination is made on whether the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform the requirements of her past relevant work (20 CFR 404.1520(f) and 416.920(f)). The term past relevant work means work performed (either as the Claimant actually performed it or as it is generally performed in the national economy) within the last 15 years or 15 years prior to the date that disability must be established. In addition, the work must have lasted long enough for the Claimant to learn to do the job and have been SGA (20 CFR 404.1560(b), 404.1565, 416.960(b), and 416.965). If the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to do her past relevant work, the Claimant is not disabled. If the Claimant is unable to do any past relevant work or does not have any past relevant work, the analysis proceeds to the fifth and last step.

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).

To determine the skills required in the national economy of work you are able to do, occupations are classified as unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled. These terms have the same meaning as defined in. 20 CFR 416.968.

Skilled work. Skilled work requires qualifications in which a person uses judgment to determine the machine and manual operations to be performed in order to obtain the proper form, quality, or quantity of material to be produced. Skilled work may require laying out work, estimating quality, determining the suitability and needed quantities of materials, making precise measurements, reading blueprints or other

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specifications, or making necessary computations or mechanical adjustments to control or regulate the work. Other skilled jobs may require dealing with people, facts, or figures or abstract ideas at a high level of complexity. 20 CFR 416.968(c).

A treating physician found the Claimant to have a normal gait, normal posture, and normal motor strength. Another physician determined that the Claimant is capable of lifting 10 pounds and reaching, pushing, and pulling occasionally but not repetitively. After careful consideration of the entire record, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform sedentary work as defined in 20 CFR 404.1567 and 416.967.

The Claimant has past relevant work experience as a nurse, which requires significant training and application of judgment to perform. The Claimant's prior work fits the definition of skilled work that could be transferred to other skilled work. The Claimant's prior work as a nurse required her to lift patients, and therefore fits the definition of heavy work.

There is no evidence upon which this Administrative Law Judge could base a finding that the Claimant is able to perform work substantially similar to work performed in the past.

STEP 5

At Step 5, the burden of proof shifts to the Department to establish that the Claimant has the Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) for Substantial Gainful Activity.

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, client is not disabled.

At the last step of the sequential evaluation process (20 CFR 404.1520(g) and 416.920(g)), a determination is made whether the Claimant is able to do any other work considering her residual functional capacity, age, education, and work experience. If the Claimant is able to do other work, she is not disabled. If the Claimant is not able to do other work and meets the duration requirement, she is disabled.

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).

The objective medical evidence indicates that the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in her prior employment and that she is physically able to do less strenuous tasks if demanded of her. The Claimant's testimony as to her limitations indicates that she should be able to perform sedentary work.

The Claimant was able to answer all the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. The Claimant was oriented to time, person and place during the hearing.

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The 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 the Claimant's ability to perform work.

Medical vocational guidelines have been developed and can be found in 20 CFR, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Section 200.00. When the facts coincide with a particular guideline, the guideline directs a conclusion as to disability. 20 CFR 416.969.

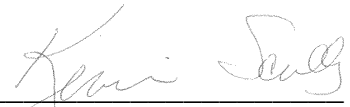
Claimant is 50 years-old, a person closely approaching advanced age, 50-54, with a high school education and above, and a history of skilled work that is transferrable to other skilled work. Based on the objective medical evidence of record Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform sedentary work. Medical Assistance (M.A.) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) are denied using Vocational Rule 201.15 as a guideline.

The Department's Program Eligibility Manual contains the following policy statements and instructions for caseworkers regarding the State Disability Assistance program: to receive State Disability Assistance, a person must be disabled, caring for a disabled person or age 65 or older. Department of Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 261 (July 1, 2013), pp 1-8. Because the Claimant does not meet the definition of disabled under the MA-P program and because the evidence of record does not establish that the Claimant is unable to work for a period exceeding 90 days, the Claimant does not meet the disability criteria for State Disability Assistance benefits either.

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 disabled not disabled for purposes of the Medical Assistance (M.A.) and State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits.

DECISION AND ORDER

Accordingly, the Department's determination is AFFIRMED REVERSED.



Kevin Scully
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura D. Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: May 2, 2014

Date Mailed: May 2, 2014

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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

KS/hj

cc:

