

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**



Reg. No.: 2014-26749  
Issue No.: 2009; 4009  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: June 25, 2014  
County: Saginaw

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Vicki L. Armstrong

**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 June 25, 2014, from Lansing, Michigan. Claimant personally appeared and testified. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included Eligibility Specialist [REDACTED].

**ISSUE**

Whether 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 November 15, 2013, Claimant filed an application for MA/Retro-MA and SDA benefits alleging disability.
- (2) On January 29, 2014, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied Claimant's application for MA-P/Retro-MA, indicating Claimant could perform other work based on his non-severe impairment, pursuant to 20 CFR 416.920(f). SDA was denied for lack of duration. (Dept Ex. A, pp 1-2).
- (3) On February 6, 2014, the Department sent Claimant notice that his application was denied.
- (4) On February 10, 2014, Claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the Department's negative action.

- (5) On June 6, 2014, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) found Claimant was not disabled and retained the capacity to perform his previous work in sales. (Dept Ex. B, p 1).
- (6) Claimant has a history of L4-L5 disc deterioration, sciatica, arthritis, and colon cancer.
- (7) Claimant is a 45 year old man whose birthday is [REDACTED].
- (8) Claimant is 6'1" tall and weighs over 232 lbs.
- (9) Claimant has a college education.
- (10) Claimant last worked in August, 2007.
- (11) 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). If an impairment does not meet or equal a listed impairment, an individual's residual functional capacity is assessed before moving from Step 3 to Step 4. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4); 20 CFR 416.945. Residual functional capacity is the most an individual can do despite the limitations based on all relevant evidence. 20 CFR 945(a)(1). An individual's residual functional capacity assessment is evaluated at both Steps 4 and 5. 20 CFR

416.920(a)(4). In determining disability, an individual's functional capacity to perform basic work activities is evaluated and if found that the individual has the ability to perform basic work activities without significant limitation, disability will not be found. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(iv). In general, the individual has the responsibility to prove disability. 20 CFR 416.912(a). An impairment or combination of impairments is not severe if it does not significantly limit an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities. 20 CFR 416.921(a). The individual has the responsibility to provide evidence of prior work experience; efforts to work; and any other factor showing how the impairment affects the ability to work. 20 CFR 416.912(c)(3)(5)(6).

As outlined above, the first step looks at the individual's current work activity. In the record presented, Claimant is not working. Therefore, he is not disqualified from receiving disability benefits under Step 1.

The severity of the individual's alleged impairment(s) is considered under Step 2. The individual bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairments. In order to be considered disabled for MA purposes, the impairment must be severe. 20 CFR 916.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(b). An impairment, or combination of impairments, is severe if it significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to do basic work activities regardless of age, education and work experience. 20 CFR 916.920(a)(4)(ii); 20 CFR 916.920(c). Basic work activities means the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. 20 CFR 916.921(b). Examples 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. *Id.*

The second step allows for dismissal of a disability claim obviously lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v Bowen*, 880 F2d 860, 862 (CA 6, 1988). The severity requirement may still be employed as an administrative convenience to screen out claims that are totally groundless solely from a medical standpoint. *Id.* at 863 *citing Farris v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 773 F2d 85, 90 n.1 (CA 6, 1985). An impairment qualifies as non-severe only if, regardless of a claimant's age, education, or work experience, the impairment would not affect the claimant's ability to work. *Salmi v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 774 F2d 685, 692 (CA 6, 1985).

In the present case, Claimant alleges disability due to L4-L5 disc deterioration, sciatica, arthritis, and colon cancer. As previously noted, the Claimant bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairment(s). Based on the medical evidence, Claimant has presented some limited medical evidence establishing that he does have some physical limitations on his ability to perform basic work activities. The medical evidence has established that Claimant has an impairment, or combination thereof, that has more than a *de minimis* effect on the Claimant's basic work activities. Further, the impairments have lasted continuously for twelve months; therefore, Claimant is not disqualified from receipt of MA-P benefits under Step 2.

In the third step of the sequential analysis of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the individual's impairment, or combination of impairments, is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. Claimant has alleged physical disabling impairments due to L4-L5 disc deterioration, sciatica, arthritis, and colon cancer.

Listing 1.00 (musculoskeletal system) and Listing 5.00 (digestive system) were considered in light of the objective evidence. Based on the foregoing, it is found that Claimant's impairment(s) do not meet the intent and severity requirement of a listed impairment; therefore, Claimant cannot be found disabled at Step 3. Accordingly, the Claimant's eligibility is considered under Step 4. 20 CFR 416.905(a).

The fourth step in analyzing a disability claim requires an assessment of the individual's residual functional capacity ("RFC") and past relevant employment. 20 CFR 416.920(a)(4)(iv). An individual is not disabled if he/she can perform past relevant work. *Id.*; 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3). 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 are 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 has a history of less than gainful employment. As such, there is no past work for Claimant to perform, nor are there past work skills to transfer to other work occupations. Accordingly, Step 5 of the sequential analysis is required.

In Step 5, an assessment of the individual's residual functional capacity and age, education, and work experience is considered to determine whether an adjustment to other work can be made. 20 CFR 416.920(4)(v). At the time of hearing, the Claimant was 45 years old and was, thus, considered to be a younger individual for MA-P purposes. Claimant has a college education. Disability is found if an individual is unable to adjust to other work. *Id.*

At this point in the analysis, the burden shifts from the Claimant to the Department to present proof that the Claimant has the residual capacity to substantial gainful employment. 20 CFR 416.960(2); *Richardson v Sec of Health and Human Services*, 735 F2d 962, 964 (CA 6, 1984). 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).

In this case, the evidence reveals that Claimant suffers from L4-L5 disc deterioration, sciatica, arthritis, and colon cancer.

Claimant testified that his sciatica affects his right leg and that back in 2003, he had colon cancer and a large portion of his large intestine was removed. Claimant stated he has had no recurrence of the cancer, but does experience occasional cramping. Claimant explained that he has been prescribed pain medications since May, 2009, for his deteriorating L4-L5 discs. Claimant added that sometimes he is unable to stand on his right leg, because his leg gives out, or his leg draws up and he needs assistance to straighten it. Claimant testified that he needs assistance to cook his own meals, do his grocery shopping, and laundry. Claimant stated he uses a cane and was prescribed the cane in 2008. He indicated he could walk up to one block, stand for up to 10 minutes as long as he had something to lean on, sit for up to 20 minutes when his back would begin hurting, and lift no more than 10 pounds.

In May, 2009, an MRI of the lumbar spine without contrast revealed the alignment was normal. At the L5-S1, there was disc degeneration with right paracentral and lateral disc herniation seen causing right lateral recess stenosis with displacement of the traversing right S1 nerve root. At L4-L5, there was disc degeneration with left far lateral disc herniation seen extending into the left neural foramina causing left neural foraminal stenosis. The conus was normal in position.

On [REDACTED], Claimant saw a physician complaining of gastrointestinal and chronic back pain. Claimant described the location as lower back with pain radiating to the right thigh. Claimant was in no apparent distress. His back was non-tender. He had no skeletal tenderness or deformity. He got on and off the cart with a great deal of alacrity. He flexed his fingers past his knees about mid shin. He had negative straight leg raises past 60 degrees bilaterally, a normal gait and balance, and no low back tenderness to palpation. He was prescribed Tegretol and Naproxen.

On [REDACTED], Claimant saw a physician assistant complaining of right knee and lower back pain. Claimant was recently released from prison. He denied a seizure disorder and stated he was given tegretol for pain. He had not taken his medications since being discharged from prison. He had a history of colon cancer with 1 month of chemotherapy and a section of bowel removed. He was requesting medication for pain. Claimant was prescribed Neurontin and Meloxicam. Claimant appeared well nourished, well hydrated and in no acute distress. His gait was normal. His spine had normal alignment and mobility.

In December, 2013, an x-ray of Claimant's right knee showed minimal tricompartmental osteoarthritis, with no acute process.

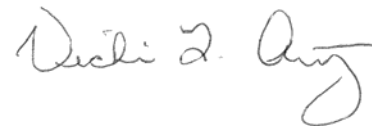
In light of the foregoing, it is found that Claimant maintains the residual functional capacity for work activities on a regular and continuing basis which includes the ability to meet the physical and mental demands required to perform at least light work as defined in 20 CFR 416.967(b). After review of the entire record using the Medical-Vocational Guidelines [20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix II] as a guide, specifically Rule 202.17, it is found that Claimant is not disabled for purposes of the MA-P, Retro-MA or SDA programs at Step 5.

**DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, finds Claimant not disabled for purposes of the MA-P, Retro-MA and SDA benefit programs.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED:

The Department's determination is **AFFIRMED**.



---

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

Date Signed: June 27, 2014

Date Mailed: June 27, 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

VLA/las

cc:

