

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 14-000701
Issue No.: 4009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: July 29, 2014
County: Eaton

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 July 29, 2014, from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED] [REDACTED].

Did the Department of Human Services (Department) properly determine that the Claimant did not meet the disability standard for 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 January 23, 2014, the Claimant submitted an application for State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits alleging disability.
2. On March 23, 2014, the Medical Review Team (MRT) determined that the Claimant did not meet the disability standard for State Disability Assistance (SDA).
3. On March 28, 2014, the Department sent the Claimant notice that it had denied the application for assistance.
4. On April 1, 2014, the Department received the Claimant's hearing request, protesting the denial of disability benefits.
5. On May 29, 2014, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) upheld the Medical Review Team's (MRT) denial of State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits.

6. The Claimant applied for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits at the Social Security Administration (SSA).
7. 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.
8. The Claimant is a 52-year-old man whose birth date is [REDACTED].
9. Claimant is 6' 0" tall and weighs 196 pounds.
10. The Claimant attended school through the 10th grade.
11. The Claimant is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
12. The Claimant was not engaged in substantial gainful activity at any time relevant to this matter.
13. The Claimant has past relevant work experience delivering truck parts and working for a vending company.
14. The Claimant's disability claim is based on an injured back and heart 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 his 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 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 State Disability Assistance (SDA) programs.

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 he 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, he is not disabled regardless of how severe his physical or mental impairments are and regardless of his age, education, and work experience. If the individual is not engaging in SGA, the analysis proceeds to the second step.

The Claimant testified that he has not been employed since 2003 and 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 prevent all work for more than 90 days? 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, he 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 he has a severely restrictive physical or mental impairment.

The Claimant is a 52-year-old man that is 6' 0" tall and weighs 196 pounds. The Claimant alleges disability due to back injuries and heart disease.

The objective medical evidence indicates the following:

The Claimant was injured in a motorcycle accident on [REDACTED]. A treating physician diagnosed the Claimant with a 50% compression fracture of the L1 vertebrae, and an endplate compression fracture of the L2 vertebrae.

A magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan of the Claimant's lumbar spine revealed a mild compression deformity of the L1 vertebrae with minimal edema, mild degenerative disc disease at the L4-5 level, a left foraminal annular tear at the L3-4 level, and degenerative disc disease at the L5-S1 level.

On [REDACTED], the Claimant was discharged from physical therapy. Treating physicians determined that the Claimant had no walking limitations, moderate sitting limitations, mild standing limitations, and moderate lifting limitations. The Claimant's range of motion of his lumbar spine remains significantly reduced. Following rehabilitation physical therapy, the Claimant's lumbar spine muscle strength rating ranged from 4/5 to 5/5.

The Claimant underwent selective right and left native coronary angiography, left heart catheterization, left ventriculogram, percutaneous coronary intervention, temporary pacemaker placement, and angio-seal of the right common femoral arteriotomy. Treating physicians restricted him from lifting more than 10 pounds for 2 weeks.

The evidence on the record indicates that the Claimant's was been diagnosed with fractures to his lumbar spine by treating physicians. The Claimant was treated and underwent physical therapy to rehabilitate his back. Upon completion of physical therapy, the Claimant's range of motion of his lumbar spine remains limited, but his muscle strength has been significantly restored. The evidence on the record supports a finding that the Claimant's condition will continue to improve.

The Claimant underwent heart surgery but the evidence on the record does not support a finding that his ability to perform work related tasks was severely impaired before the operation or that he did not experience significant improvement if they were. The evidence on the record does not support a finding of continuing severe impairments due to his heart condition.

The objective medical evidence of record is not sufficient to establish that Claimant has severe impairments will prevent him from all work for more than 90 days. Therefore, the Claimant is found not to be disabled at this step. In order to conduct a thorough evaluation of Claimant's disability assertion, the analysis will continue.

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 spine fracture 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 evidence on the record does not support a finding that the Claimant's condition meets or equals a listing under section 4.00 Cardiovascular system.

The medical evidence of the Claimant's condition does not give rise to a finding that he 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 he 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 his ability to do physical and mental work activities on a sustained basis despite limitations from his 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 his 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 his 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.

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 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.

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. For example, we consider jobs unskilled if the primary work duties are handling, feeding and offbearing (that is, placing or removing materials from machines which are automatic or operated by others), or machine tending, and a person can usually learn to do the job in 30 days, and little specific vocational preparation and judgment are needed. A person does not gain work skills by doing unskilled jobs. 20 CFR 416.968(a).

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).

The Claimant was injured in a motorcycle accident and suffered fractures to his lumbar spine. Following treatment and rehabilitation therapy, the Claimant's condition has improved and the evidence supports a finding that it will continue to improve. The evidence on the record does not support a finding of a severe impairment of the Claimant's ability to perform any work related tasks. After careful consideration of the

entire record, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform light work as defined in 20 CFR 404.1567 and 416.967.

The Claimant was past relevant work experience delivering truck parts and working for a vending machine company. The Claimant's prior work fits the definition of medium 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 his residual functional capacity, age, education, and work experience. If the Claimant is able to do other work, he is not disabled. If the Claimant is not able to do other work and meets the duration requirement, he 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 his prior employment and that he is physically able to do less strenuous tasks if demanded of him. The Claimant's testimony as to his limitations indicates that he should be able to perform light or sedentary work.

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 52-years-old, a person closely approaching advanced age, 50-54, with a limited education, and a history of unskilled work. Based on the objective medical evidence of record Claimant has the residual functional capacity to perform light work.

State Disability Assistance (SDA) is denied using Vocational Rule 202.10 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.

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 State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits.

DECISION AND ORDER

Accordingly, the Department's determination is **AFFIRMED**.



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

Date Signed: **8/18/2014**

Date Mailed: **8/18/2014**

KS/las

NOTICE OF APPEAL: A party may appeal this Hearing Decision in the circuit court in the county in which he/she resides, or the circuit court in Ingham County, within 30 days of the receipt date.

A party may request a rehearing or reconsideration of this Hearing Decision from the Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS) within 30 days of the mailing date of this Hearing Decision, or MAHS may order a rehearing or reconsideration on its own motion.

MAHS may grant a party's Request for Rehearing or Reconsideration 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 party requesting a rehearing or reconsideration 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 this Hearing Decision is mailed.

A written request may be faxed or mailed to MAHS. If submitted by fax, 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

cc:

