

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 14-004989
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: August 12, 2014
County: Genesee-District 2

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, an in-person hearing was held on August 12, 2014, from Flint, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included her boyfriend [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Representative [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included Eligibility Specialist [REDACTED] [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Whether the Department properly determined that Claimant was not disabled for purposes of the Medical Assistance (MA) and Retro-MA benefit programs?

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 January 23, 2014, Claimant filed an application for MA/Retro-MA benefits alleging disability.
- (2) On March 13, 2014, the Medical Review Team (MRT) denied Claimant's application for MA-P/Retro-MA, indicating a lack of duration of 12 months. (Dept Ex. A, pp 114-115).
- (3) On March 14, 2014, the Department sent notice to Claimant that her application for MA and Retro-MA had been denied.
- (4) On June 19, 2014, Claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the department's negative action.
- (5) On July 14, 2014, the State Hearing Review Team (SHRT) upheld the denial of MA-P benefits. (Depart Ex. B).

- (6) Claimant has a history of neuropathy, colitis, left shoulder arthritis, emphysema, asthma, gastroenteritis and arthritis in her neck.
- (7) Claimant is a 49 year old woman whose birthday is [REDACTED].
- (8) Claimant is 5'10" tall and weighs 145 lbs.
- (9) Claimant completed a high school equivalent education.
- (10) She has not worked since August, 2012.
- (11) Claimant was appealing the denial of Social Security disability benefits at the time of the hearing.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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

The Medical Assistance (MA) program is established by Title XIX of the Social Security Act, 42 USC 1396-1396w-5; 42 USC 1315; the Affordable Care Act of 2010, the collective term for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Pub. L. No. 111-148, as amended by the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-152; and 42 CFR 430.10-.25. The Department (formerly known as the Family Independence Agency) administers the MA program pursuant to 42 CFR 435, MCL 400.10, and MCL 400.105-.112k.

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 involved in substantial gainful activity and testified that he has not worked since August, 2012. Therefore, she 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).

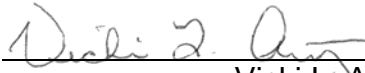
On [REDACTED], Claimant underwent an independent medical evaluation by the [REDACTED]. The physician noted Claimant has a history of chronic alcoholism with associated neuropathy in her hands and feet since 2005. She states that she continues to drink at least half a pint of liquor daily. She states that her neuropathy is variable depending upon the day. She was hospitalized in October, 2013, for gastroenteritis and colitis for five days and did undergo a work up at that time but was found to have no evidence of cirrhosis or liver disease. She has had an associated history of hypertension. She denies any heart failure or myocardial infarctions. She does not drive. She can do household chores and grocery shop. She now mostly spends her time sitting at home and watching television. She is able to sit without lumbar support. She can stand for about 30 minutes, walk a block and lift 50 pounds on occasion. She is cooperative in answering questions and following commands. Her immediate, recent and remote memory is intact. Mental status was normal. Dexterity is unimpaired. She had no difficulty getting on and off the examination table, mild difficulty heel and toe walking and squatting and moderate difficulty standing on either foot. Straight leg raising is negative. Her motor strength is normal. Tone is normal. Sensory is intact to light touch and pinprick. Reflexes are intact and symmetrical. She walks with a wide based ataxic gait without the use of an assistive device. Diagnosis is chronic alcohol abuse with neuropathy. She does continue to drink moderately. She did have findings of peripheral neuropathy today. She is on Neurontin for neuropathy. She did have some gait unsteadiness but here were no real findings of cerebellar dysfunction. She had no findings of encephalopathy or cirrhotic disease. At this point, alcohol cessation and vitamin supplementation may give her some remediability. She is at risk for further deterioration over time. She also had some subtle findings of osteoporotic disease presumably due to chronic alcohol intake as well. She also had findings of emphysematous disease but she is not on inhaler therapy.

As previously noted, Claimant bears the burden to present sufficient objective medical evidence to substantiate the alleged disabling impairment(s). In the present case, Claimant alleges disability due to neuropathy, colitis, left shoulder arthritis, emphysema, asthma, gastroenteritis and arthritis in her neck. Claimant's boyfriend testified that she has been looking for employment. Therefore, based on the lack of objective medical evidence that the alleged impairment(s) are severe enough to reach the criteria and definition of disability, Claimant is denied at Step 2 for lack of a severe impairment and no further analysis is required.

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**.



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

Date Signed: **8/22/2014**

Date Mailed: **8/22/2014**

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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.

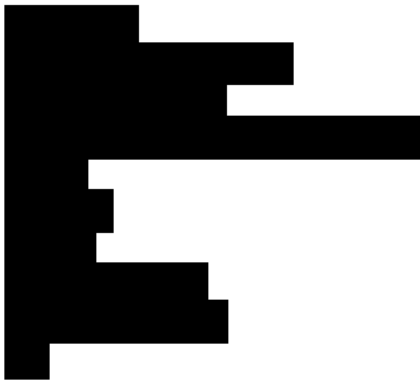
A written request may be faxed or mailed to MAHS. If submitted by fax, the written request must be faxed to (517) 335-6088 and be labeled as follows:

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:

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the names and contact information of the recipients listed in the 'cc:' field.