

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 14-009430
Issue No.: 4009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: October 1, 2014
County: OGEMAW

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Aaron McClintic

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 October 1, 2014, from Lansing, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included Claimant and a witness, [REDACTED]. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED].

ISSUE

Whether the Department properly determined that Claimant was not disabled for purposes of the State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefit program?

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the competent, material, and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

1. Claimant applied for SDA on February 5, 2014.
2. The Medical Review Team (MRT) denied the application on July 29, 2014.
3. Claimant filed a request for hearing on August 12, 2014, regarding the SDA denial.
4. A telephone hearing was held on October 1, 2014.
5. Claimant is 5' 7" tall and weighs 150 pounds.
6. Claimant is 49 years of age.

7. Claimant's impairments have been medically diagnosed as back pain, depression and anxiety.
8. Claimant has the following symptoms: pain, fatigue, insomnia, memory and concentration problems, crying spells and suicide attempts.
9. Claimant completed high school and a 2-year college degree.
10. Claimant is able to read, write, and perform basic math skills.
11. Claimant is not working. Claimant last worked in 2009 as a nurse. Claimant previously worked as a cleaner.
12. Claimant lives alone.
13. Claimant testified that she cannot perform some household chores.
14. Claimant takes the following prescribed medications:
 - a. Morphine
 - b. Vicodin
 - c. Prozac
 - d. Deseryl
15. Claimant testified to the following physical limitations:
 - i. Sitting: 30 minutes
 - ii. Standing: 5-10 minutes
 - iii. Walking: 100 feet
 - iv. Bend/stoop: difficulty
 - v. Lifting: 10 lbs.
 - vi. Grip/grasp: no limitations
16. Claimant testified to experiencing pain, at a high level of 10, on an everyday basis with some pain, always present, at a low level of 6.
17. In a psychological evaluation dated [REDACTED], the examining psychologist stated the following under SUMMARY: "Her ability to relate and interact with others, including coworkers and supervisors, is impaired. Her depression and anxiety could affect her interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Her ability to understand, recall and complete tasks and expectations does not appear to be significantly impaired. She is able to perform simple tasks with no major limitations. She struggled with tasks that have multiple steps and increased complexity. Her ability to maintain concentration does seem somewhat impaired. As a result of her emotional state she may often be distracted and her effectiveness and performance will likely be limited and slowed. Her ability to

withstand normal stressors associated with a workplace setting is somewhat impaired.” Under prognosis the examining psychologist stated “poor”.

18. An MRI Report of Claimant’s lumbar spine from [REDACTED] showed the following under IMPRESSION: “1. Moderate spondylosis degenerative disk disease in the lumbar spine, especially at L1-L2, L2-L3 disk levels, with extensive facet joint degenerative changes in the lumbar spine. There is acquired mild central canal stenosis at L2-L3 disk level. 2. There is small broad-based right paracentral disk protrusion at L5-S1 disk level, extending only in the epidural fat, is coming close to the right intraspinal S1 nerve root. No significant central canal stenosis is seen at this level. Correlate with radicular symptoms and clinical symptomatology.”

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 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 42 CFR 435, MCL 400.10 *et seq.* and Mich Admin Code, Rules 400.3151 – 400.3180. 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 MA-P program. Under SSI, 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.

Federal regulations require that the Department use the same operative definition for “disabled” as used for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. 42 CFR 435.540(a).

“Disability” is:

...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.

In determining whether an individual is disabled, 20 CFR 416.920 requires the trier of fact to follow a sequential evaluation process by which current work activity, the severity of the impairment(s), residual functional capacity, and vocational factors (i.e., age, education, and work experience) are assessed in that order. When a determination that an individual is, or is not, disabled can be made at any step in the sequential evaluation, evaluation under a subsequent step is not necessary.

First, the trier of fact must determine if the individual is working and if the work is substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.920(b). In this case, the Claimant is not working. Therefore, the Claimant is not disqualified at this step in the evaluation.

The second step to be determined in considering whether the Claimant is considered disabled is the severity of the impairment. In order to qualify the impairment must be considered severe, which is defined as an impairment which significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities. Examples of these include:

1. Physical functions such as walking, standing, sitting, lifting, pushing, 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. 20 CFR 416.921(b).

In this case, the Claimant's medical evidence of record supports a finding that Claimant has significant physical and mental limitations upon Claimant's ability to perform basic work activities such as walking, standing, sitting, lifting, pushing, pulling, reaching, carrying, or handling. Medical evidence has clearly established that the Claimant has an impairment (or combination of impairments) that has more than a minimal effect on the Claimant's work activities. See Social Security Rulings: 85-28, 88-13, and 82-63.

In the third step of the analysis, the trier of fact must determine if the Claimant's impairment (or combination of impairments) is listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant's medical record does not support a finding that the Claimant's impairment(s) is a "listed impairment" or equal to a listed impairment. See Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR Part 404, Part A. Listings 1.04 and 12.04 were considered.

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

clinical/laboratory findings, diagnosis/prescribed treatment, prognosis for a recovery and/or medical assessment of ability to do work-related activities, or ability to reason and to make appropriate mental adjustments, if a mental disability is being alleged. 20 CFR 416.913. A conclusory statement by a physician, or mental health professional, that an individual is disabled, or blind, is not sufficient without supporting medical evidence to establish disability. 20 CFR 416.927.

The fourth step of the analysis to be considered is whether the Claimant has the ability to perform work previously performed by the Claimant within the past 15 years. The trier of fact must determine whether the impairment(s) presented prevent the Claimant from doing past relevant work. In the present case, the Claimant's past employment was as a nurse. Working as a nurse, as described by Claimant at hearing, would be considered medium work. The Claimant's impairments would prevent her from doing past relevant work. This Administrative Law Judge will continue through step 5.

In the final step of the analysis, the trier of fact must determine if the Claimant's impairment(s) prevent the Claimant from doing other work. 20 CFR 416.920(f). This determination is based upon the Claimant's:

1. residual functional capacity defined simply as "what can you still do despite your limitations? 20 CFR 416.945;
2. age, education, and work experience, 20 CFR 416.963-965; and
3. the kinds of work which exist in significant numbers in the national economy which the Claimant could perform despite her limitations. 20 CFR 416.966.

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).

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).

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).

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).

Heavy work: Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. If someone can do heavy work, we determine that he or she can also do medium, light, and sedentary work. 20 CFR 416.967(d).

See *Felton v DSS* 161 Mich. App 690, 696 (1987). Once the Claimant makes it to the final step of the analysis, the Claimant has already established a prima facie case of disability. *Richardson v Secretary of Health and Human Services*, 732 Fd2 962 (6th Cir, 1984).

Moving forward, the burden of proof rests with the State to prove by substantial evidence that the Claimant has the residual function capacity for substantial gainful activity. After careful review of Claimant's extensive medical record, and the Administrative Law Judge's personal interaction with Claimant at the hearing, this Administrative Law Judge finds that Claimant's exertional and non-exertional impairments render Claimant unable to engage in a full range of, even sedentary, work activities on a regular and continuing basis. 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 11, Section 201.00(h). See Social Security Ruling 83-10; *Wilson v Heckler*, 743 F2d 216 (1986). The Department has failed to provide vocational evidence which establishes that Claimant has the residual functional capacity for substantial gainful activity and, that given Claimant's age, education, and work experience, there are significant numbers of jobs in the national economy which the Claimant could perform despite Claimant's limitations.

Accordingly, this Administrative Law Judge concludes that Claimant is disabled for purposes of the SDA programs as of February 2014. Claimant's testimony regarding her limitations and ability to sit, stand, walk, lift, and carry is credible and supported by substantial medical evidence. These findings are also consistent with the findings of Claimant's treating physician. Claimant also has psychological impairments that are substantially limiting.


Therefore, Claimant is found to be disabled.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that Claimant is medically disabled as of February 2014.

Accordingly, the Department's decision is hereby **REVERSED** and the Department is ORDERED to:

1. Initiate a review of the application for SDA dated February 5, 2014, if not done previously, to determine Claimant's non-medical eligibility.
2. The Department shall inform Claimant of the determination in writing. A review of this case shall be set for October 2015.


Aaron McClintic
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: **10/30/2014**

Date Mailed: **10/30/2014**

AM/jaf

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:

