

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

IN THE MATTER OF:

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 14-011241
Issue No.: 2009
Case No.: [REDACTED]
Hearing Date: December 03, 2014
County: WAYNE-DISTRICT 41

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Susan C. Burke

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 December 3, 2014, from Detroit, Michigan. Participants on behalf of Claimant included Claimant and Claimant's Authorized Hearing Representative, [REDACTED] Claimant's niece, [REDACTED], interpreted for Claimant. Participants on behalf of the Department of Human Services (Department) included [REDACTED] Hearings Coordinator.

ISSUE

Whether the Department properly determined that Claimant was not disabled for purposes of the Medical Assistance (MA) 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 submitted an application for public assistance seeking MA (Emergency Services Only) and Retroactive MA on [REDACTED].
2. On [REDACTED], the Medical Review Team (MRT) determined that Claimant was not disabled.
3. The Department notified Claimant of the MRT determination on [REDACTED].
4. On [REDACTED], the Department received Claimant's timely written request for hearing.
5. At the time of the hearing, Claimant was 59 years old with a birth date of [REDACTED].

6. Claimant has a third-grade education and is not fluent in English.
7. Claimant is currently working part time as a housekeeper.
8. Claimant earns less than \$1,070.00 per month.
9. Claimant has a relevant work history as a factory worker.
10. Claimant suffers from atrial fibrillation, headaches, recurrent UTI, high blood pressure and obesity.
11. Claimant's impairments have lasted, or are expected to last, continuously for a period of twelve months or longer.
12. Claimant's complaints and allegations concerning her impairments and limitations, when considered in light of all objective medical evidence, as well as the record as a whole, reflect an individual who is so impaired as to be incapable of engaging in any substantial gainful activity on a regular and continuing basis.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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. Department policies are found in the Bridges Administrative Manual ("BAM"), the Bridges Eligibility Manual ("BEM"), and the Bridges Reference Tables ("RFT").

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), statutory listings of medical impairments, 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. (SGA) 20 CFR 416.924(b). A person who is earning more than \$1,070.00 (non-blind) per month in 2014 is ordinarily considered to be engaging in SGA. 20 CFR 416.974

In this case, Claimant testified credibly that she is currently working part time as a housekeeper, earning less than the SGA amount of \$1,070.00 per month. Therefore, Claimant is not disqualified for MA at this step in the sequential evaluation process.

Second, in order to be considered disabled for purposes of MA, a person must have a severe impairment. 20 CFR 416.920(c). A severe impairment is an impairment expected to last twelve months or more (or result in death) which significantly limits an individual's physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities. The term "basic work activities" means the abilities and aptitudes necessary to do most jobs. Examples of these 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. 20 CFR 416.921(b).

The purpose of the second step in the sequential evaluation process is to screen out claims lacking in medical merit. *Higgs v. Bowen* 880 F2d 860, 862 (6th Cir, 1988). As a result, the Department may only screen out claims at this level which are "totally groundless" solely from a medical standpoint. The *Higgs* court used the severity

requirement as a “*de minimus* hurdle” in the disability determination. The *de minimus* standard is a provision of a law that allows the court to disregard trifling matters.

In this case, medical evidence has clearly established that Claimant has an impairment (or combination of impairments) that has more than a minimal effect on Claimant’s work activities.

In the third step of the sequential analysis of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the Claimant’s impairment, or combination of impairments, meets or medically equals the criteria of an impairment listed in Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404. (20 CFR 416.920 (d), 416.925, and 416.926.) This Administrative Law Judge finds that the Claimant’s medical record will not support a finding that Claimant’s impairment(s) is a “listed impairment” or is medically equal to a listed impairment. See Appendix 1 of Subpart P of 20 CFR, Part 404, Part A.

This Administrative Law Judge consulted all listings. The medical records do not support a finding that Claimant can be found to be disabled based upon medical evidence alone. 20 CFR 416.920(d).

In the fourth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the Claimant has the residual functional capacity (RFC) to perform the requirements of Claimant’s past relevant work. 20 CFR 416.920(a) (4) (iv).

An individual’s residual functional capacity is the individual’s ability to do physical and mental work activities on a sustained basis despite limitations from the individual’s impairments. Residual functional capacity 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. Residual functional capacity is the most that can be done, despite the limitations. SSR 96-8p explains “In assessing RFC, the adjudicator must discuss the individual’s ability to perform sustained work activities in an ordinary work setting on a regular and continuing basis (i.e., 8 hours a day, for 5 days a week, or an equivalent work schedule), and describe the maximum amount of each work-related activity the individual can perform based on the evidence available in the case record.”

In making this finding, the trier of fact must consider all of the Claimant’s impairments, including impairments that are not severe (20 CFR 416.920 (e) and 416.945; SSR 96-8p.) Further, a residual functional capacity assessment must be based on all relevant evidence in the case record, such as medical history, laboratory findings, the effects of treatments (including limitations or restrictions imposed by the mechanics of treatment), reports of daily activities, lay evidence, recorded observations, medical treating source statements, effects of symptoms (including pain) that are reasonably attributed to the impairment, and evidence from attempts to work. SSR 96-8p.

The term past relevant work means work performed (either as Claimant actually performed it or as it is generally performed in the national economy) within the last fifteen years or fifteen 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 substantially gainfully employed (20 CFR 416.960 (b) and 416.965.) If Claimant has the residual functional capacity to do Claimant's past relevant work, Claimant is not disabled. 20 CFR 416.960(b)(3). If 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.

The medical information indicates that Claimant was diagnosed in August of 2013, July of 2014, and November of 2014 with atrial fibrillation, headaches, recurrent UTI, high blood pressure and obesity.

Claimant testified credibly that she works part time as a housekeeper, earning less than \$1,070.00 per month. Claimant testified that she is unable to work full time as she is very tired after working only part time, and she would not have the physical power to work full time. Claimant's testimony is consistent with the medical report of [REDACTED] r [REDACTED], which indicates that Claimant reported palpitations with stress and headaches.

Claimant has also been medically described as obese, which condition likely exacerbates her impairments.

Obesity is a medically determinable impairment that is often associated with disturbance of the respiratory system, and disturbance of this system can be a major cause of disability in individuals with obesity. The combined effects of obesity with respiratory impairments can be greater than the effects of each of the impairments considered separately. Therefore, when determining whether an individual with obesity has a listing-level impairment or combination of impairments, and when assessing a claim at other steps of the sequential evaluation process, including when assessing an individual's residual functional capacity, adjudicators must consider any additional and cumulative effects of obesity.

Listing 3.00 I.

In this case, Claimant's residual functional capacity is evaluated considering the cumulative effects of Claimant's obesity.

Claimant's past relevant work included work in a factory. Given the functional requirements as stated by Claimant for this work, (which is consistent with how these jobs are typically performed), and Claimant's functional limitations as described above, this Administrative Law Judge concludes that Claimant does not retain the capacity to perform her past relevant work on a sustained basis.

In the fifth step of the sequential consideration of a disability claim, the trier of fact must determine if the Claimant's impairment(s) prevents 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 his/her limitations. 20 CFR 416.966.

See *Felton v DSS*, 161 Mich. App 690, 696 (1987). Once Claimant reaches Step 5 in the sequential review process, Claimant has already established a *prima facie* case of disability. *Richardson v Secretary of Health and Human Services*, 735 F2d 962 (6th Cir, 1984). At that point, the burden of proof is on the state to prove by substantial evidence that the Claimant has the residual functional capacity for substantial gainful activity.

For the purpose of determining the exertional requirements of work in the national economy, jobs are classified as "sedentary", "light", "medium", "heavy", and "very heavy." 20 CFR 416.967. These terms have the same meaning as are used in the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*. Sedentary work involves lifting of no more than 10 pounds at a time and occasionally lifting or carrying articles like docket files, ledgers, and small tools. 20 CFR 416.967(a) 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. *Id.* Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required occasionally and other sedentary criteria are met. Light work involves lifting no more than 20 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing up to 10 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(b) Even though 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. *Id.* To be considered capable of performing a full or wide range of light work, an individual must have the ability to do substantially all of these activities. *Id.* An individual capable of light work is also capable of sedentary work, unless there are additionally limiting factors such as loss of fine dexterity or inability to sit for long periods of time. *Id.* Medium work involves lifting no more than 50 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 25 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(c) An individual capable of performing medium work is also capable of light and sedentary work. *Id.* Heavy work involves lifting no more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying of objects weighing up to 50 pounds. 20 CFR 416.967(d) An individual capable of heavy work is also capable of medium, light, and sedentary work. *Id.* Finally, very heavy work involves lifting objects

weighing more than 100 pounds at a time with frequent lifting or carrying objects weighing 50 pounds or more. 20 CFR 416.967(e) An individual capable of very heavy work is able to perform work under all categories. *Id.*

Limitations or restrictions which affect the ability to meet the demands of jobs other than strength demands (exertional requirements, i.e. sitting, standing, walking, lifting, carrying, pushing, or pulling) are considered nonexertional. 20 CFR 416.969a(a) In considering whether an individual can perform past relevant work, a comparison of the individual's residual functional capacity with the demands of past relevant work. *Id.* If an individual can no longer do past relevant work the same residual functional capacity assessment along with an individual's age, education, and work experience is considered to determine whether an individual can adjust to other work which exists in the national economy. *Id.* Examples of non-exertional limitations or restrictions include difficulty function due to nervousness, anxiousness, or depression; difficulty maintaining attention or concentration; difficulty understanding or remembering detailed instructions; difficulty in seeing or hearing; difficulty tolerating some physical feature(s) of certain work settings (i.e. can't tolerate dust or fumes); or difficulty performing the manipulative or postural functions of some work such as reaching, handling, stooping, climbing, crawling, or crouching. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(1)(i) – (vi) If the impairment(s) and related symptoms, such as pain, only affect the ability to perform the non-exertional aspects of work-related activities, the rules in Appendix 2 do not direct factual conclusions of disabled or not disabled. 20 CFR 416.969a(c)(2) The determination of whether disability exists is based upon the principles in the appropriate sections of the regulations, giving consideration to the rules for specific case situations in Appendix 2. *Id.*

In order to evaluate the Claimant's skills and to help determine the existence in the national economy of work the Claimant is able to do, occupations are classified as unskilled, semiskilled and skilled. SSR 86-8.

Claimant is fifty-nine years old, with a third-grade education. Claimant is not fluent in English. Claimant has a history of unskilled work, (20 CFR. 416.968 (c)) performed at the light to medium level. (20 CFR 416.967) Claimant's medical records are consistent with Claimant's testimony that Claimant has the residual functional capacity limited to sedentary work. Federal Rule 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, contains specific profiles for determining disability based on residual functional capacity and vocational profiles. Under Table I, Rule, 201.01, Claimant is found disabled for purposes of the Medical Assistance program.

The Department has failed to provide vocational evidence which establishes that the 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.

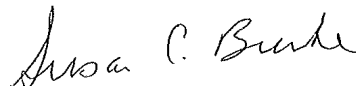
The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and for the reasons stated on the record, if any, finds Claimant disabled for purposes of the MA benefit program.

DECISION AND ORDER

Accordingly, the Department's determination is REVERSED.

THE DEPARTMENT IS ORDERED TO INITIATE THE FOLLOWING, IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEPARTMENT POLICY AND CONSISTENT WITH THIS HEARING DECISION, WITHIN 10 DAYS OF THE DATE OF MAILING OF THIS DECISION AND ORDER:

1. The Department shall initiate processing of the [REDACTED] MA application and retroactive MA application to determine if all non-medical criteria are met and inform of the determination in accordance with Department policy.
2. The Department shall review the Claimant's continued eligibility in October of 2015, in accordance with Department policy.



Susan C. Burke
Administrative Law Judge
for Maura Corrigan, Director
Department of Human Services

Date Signed: **12/5/2014**

Date Mailed: **12/5/2014**

SCB / hw

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 48909-8139

CC:

