

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

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

[REDACTED]

Reg. No.: 15-007608  
Issue No.: 4009  
Case No.: [REDACTED]  
Hearing Date: July 16, 2015  
County: Calhoun

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Vicki 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 July 16, 2015, from Lansing, Michigan. Claimant personally appeared and testified. Participants on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services (Department) included Hearing Facilitator [REDACTED] and Eligibility Specialist [REDACTED].

**ISSUE**

Whether the Department properly determined that Claimant was no longer disabled and denied his review application for State Disability Assistance (SDA) based upon medical improvement?

**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 was an SDA benefit recipient and his benefits case was scheduled for review in April, 2015.
- (2) On April 21, 2015, Claimant filed a Redetermination for SDA benefits alleging continued disability.
- (3) On April 29, 2015, the Medical Review Team denied Claimant's application for continuing eligibility for SDA.
- (4) On April 29, 2015, the Department sent Claimant notice that her SDA benefits case would be closed based upon medical improvement.
- (5) On May 5, 2015, Claimant filed a request for a hearing to contest the Department's negative action.

- (6) Claimant has a history of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma, hypertension, bilateral torn rotator cuffs, carpal tunnel syndrome, thoracic aortic aneurysm, herniated discs at C2, C4 and L5, obstructive sleep apnea, anxiety, asthma, depression, diabetes, memory loss, thyroid disease, and morbid obesity.
- (7) Claimant is a 49 year old woman whose birthday is [REDACTED].
- (8) Claimant is 5'2" tall and weighs 213 lbs.
- (9) Claimant completed the ninth grade.
- (10) Claimant last worked in 2014.
- (11) Claimant was appealing the denial of Social Security disability at the time of the hearing.
- (12) Claimant's impairments have lasted, or are expected to last, continuously for a period of twelve months or longer.
- (13) 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 State Disability Assistance (SDA) program which provides financial assistance for disabled persons is established by 2004 PA 344. The Department of Health and 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.

Pursuant to the federal regulations at 20 CFR 416.994, once a client is determined eligible for disability benefits, the eligibility for such benefits must be reviewed periodically. Before determining that a client is no longer eligible for disability benefits, the agency must establish that there has been a medical improvement of the client's impairment that is related to the client's ability to work. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5).

To assure that disability reviews are carried out in a uniform manner, that a decision of continuing disability can be made in the most expeditious and administratively efficient way, and that any decisions to stop disability benefits are made objectively, neutrally, and are fully documented, we will follow specific steps in reviewing the question of whether your disability continues. Our review may cease and benefits may be continued at any point if we determine there is sufficient evidence to find that you are still unable to engage in substantial gainful activity. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5).

The first question asks:

- (i) Are you engaging in substantial gainful activity? If you are (and any applicable trial work period has been completed), we will find disability to have ended (see paragraph (b)(3)(v) of this section).

Claimant is not disqualified from this step because she has not engaged in substantial gainful activity at any time relevant to this matter. Furthermore, the evidence on the record fails to establish that Claimant has a severe impairment which meets or equals a listed impairment found at 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 1. Therefore, the analysis continues. 20 CF 416.994(b)(5)(ii).

The next step asks the question if there has been medical improvement. Medical improvement is any decrease in the medical severity of your impairment(s) which was present at the time of the most recent favorable medical decision that you were disabled

or continued to be disabled. A determination that there has been a decrease in medical severity must be based on changes (improvement) in the symptoms, signs and/or laboratory findings associated with your impairment(s). 20 CFR 416.994(b)(1)(i).

If there is a decrease in medical severity as shown by the symptoms, signs and laboratory findings, we then must determine if it is related to your ability to do work. In paragraph (b)(1)(iv) of this section, we explain the relationship between medical severity and limitation on functional capacity to do basic work activities (or residual functional capacity) and how changes in medical severity can affect your residual functional capacity. In determining whether medical improvement that has occurred is related to your ability to do work, we will assess your residual functional capacity (in accordance with paragraph (b)(1)(iv) of this section) based on the current severity of the impairment(s) which was present at your last favorable medical decision. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(2)(ii).

The Medical Review Team (MRT) denied Claimant's continuing SDA benefits because her condition has improved and she retains the capacity to perform other work. A review of the MRT decision does not indicate how Claimant's condition has improved.

Claimant submitted documentation from her Advanced Nurse Practitioner dated [REDACTED], indicating Claimant is unable to work at this time due to several health diagnoses. Claimant has been diagnosed with chronic respiratory failure, cervical disc displacement, myalgia, myositis and pulmonary hypertension. The nurse practitioner opined that due to the multiple chronic illnesses, Claimant is unable to work at this time. The nurse practitioner noted Claimant's limitations include no standing, walking, sitting for an extended period of time, no lifting over 5 pounds, no climbing/using ladders, no strenuous activity, no repetitive lifting/movement, and work conditions must include air conditioning.

Moreover, Claimant was hospitalized overnight on [REDACTED], for acute chest pain radiating to the upper right extremity. She had a previous echocardiogram which indicated right heart abnormalities. Work up was benign. Myocardial infarction was ruled out. The stress test did not reveal any reversible ischemia. The CT revealed a stable aneurysmal dilation of the descending thoracic aorta. No dissection. No central pulmonary arterial emboli identified. She was discharged in stable condition on [REDACTED].

Pursuant to the federal regulations, at medical review, the agency has the burden of not only proving Claimant's medical condition has improved, but that the improvement relates to the client's ability to do basic work activities. The agency has the burden of establishing that Claimant is currently capable of doing basic work activities based on objective medical evidence from qualified medical sources. 20 CFR 416.994(b)(5).

In this case, the Department has not met its burden of proof. The agency has provided no evidence that indicates Claimant's condition has improved. Moreover, the agency provided no objective medical evidence from qualified medical sources that show

Claimant is currently capable of doing basic work activities. Accordingly, the Department's SDA eligibility determination cannot be upheld at this time.


**DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides the Department erred in determining Claimant is not currently disabled for MA/Retro-MA eligibility purposes.

Accordingly, the Department's decision is **REVERSED**, and it is ORDERED that:

1. The Department shall process Claimant's April 21, 2015, SDA Redetermination, and shall award her all the benefits she may be entitled to receive, as long as she meets the remaining financial and non-financial eligibility factors.
2. The Department shall review Claimant's medical condition for improvement in July, 2016, unless her Social Security Administration disability status is approved by that time.
3. The Department shall obtain updated medical evidence from Claimant's treating physicians, physical therapists, pain clinic notes, etc. regarding her continued treatment, progress and prognosis at review.

**It is SO ORDERED.**

  
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**Vicki Armstrong**  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Nick Lyon, Director  
Department of Health and Human  
Services

Date Signed: **7/22/2015**

Date Mailed: **7/22/2015**

VLA

**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:

