



RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS  
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM  
Christopher Seppanen  
Executive Director

SHELLY EDGERTON  
DIRECTOR

[REDACTED]

Date Mailed: November 16, 2016  
MAHS Docket No.: 16-014797  
Agency No.: [REDACTED]  
Petitioner: [REDACTED]

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:** Susanne E. Harris

### **HEARING DECISION**

Following the Petitioner'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 November 15, 2016, from Lansing, Michigan. The Petitioner, [REDACTED] appeared and testified with her mother, [REDACTED]. The Department of Health and Human Services (Department) was represented by Assistance Payments Supervisor, [REDACTED].

### **PROCEDURAL HISTORY**

The record closed at the conclusion of the hearing. The following exhibits were offered and admitted into evidence:

Department: A--September 1, 2016, Medical Review Team (MRT) denial.  
B--Medical Packet.  
C--September 21, 2016, Notice of Case Action.

Petitioner: 1-- Additional Medical Evidence that the Petitioner brought with her to hearing.

### **ISSUE**

Whether the Department properly determined that the Petitioner was not disabled for purposes of the State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefit program 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. The Petitioner was approved for SDA on January 4, 2016 and was receiving SDA at all times pertinent to this case.
2. In April, 2016, the Petitioner filed a Redetermination for SDA benefits alleging continuing disability.
3. On September 1, 2016, the MRT denied the Petitioner's continuing SDA benefits.
4. On September 21, 2016, the Department mailed the Petitioner a Notice of Case Action, informing the Petitioner the SDA benefits would close effective November 1, 2016.
5. On October 5, 2016, the Petitioner submitted a Request for Hearing to the Department contesting the Department's denial.

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Department policies are contained in the Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM), Department of Health and 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.

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).

The Petitioner 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 the Petitioner 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).

In this case, the MRT denied the Petitioner's claim of disability stating that there has been medical improvement and that the Petitioner has been found capable of performing light work. There was no additional analysis provided.

The Petitioner underwent left hip surgery in November 2015. The Petitioner suffers from degenerative joint disease, degenerative disc disease, back pain and peripheral neuropathy. The Petitioner has suffered from numbness in her legs. The Petitioner has testified and submitted objective, medical evidence to indicate that she has recently been diagnosed with aortoiliac disease and she is scheduled for an aorto bifemoral bypass on December 9, 2016. The objective, medical evidence in the record simply does not support the MRT's conclusion that the Petitioner has medically improved.

As a result, the Department has not met its burden of proof. The Department has provided no evidence that indicates the Petitioner's medical condition has improved or that any improvement relates to her ability to do basic work activities. The agency provided no objective medical evidence from qualified medical sources that show Petitioner is currently capable of doing basic work activities. Accordingly, the agency's SDA eligibility determination cannot be upheld at this time.

### **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. Reinstate the Petitioner's SDA back to the date of denial (the record is unclear as to whether that was October 1, 2016 or November 1, 2016) and issue any retroactive SDA benefits she may otherwise be entitled to.

2. Redetermine the Petitioner's SDA eligibility in July, 2017.



SH/nr

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Susanne E. Harris  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Nick Lyon, Director  
Department of Health and Human Services

**NOTICE OF APPEAL:** A party may appeal this Order in circuit court within 30 days of the receipt date. A copy of the circuit court appeal must be filed with the Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS).

A party may request a rehearing or reconsideration of this Order if the request is received by MAHS within 30 days of the date the Order was issued. The party requesting a rehearing or reconsideration must provide the specific reasons for the request. MAHS will not review any response to a request for rehearing/reconsideration.

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

**DHHS**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Petitioner**

[REDACTED]