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GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF LICENSING AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS
MICHIGAN OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS AND RULES

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Date Mailed: March 15, 2022
MOAHR Docket No.: 21-005943
Agency No.: ██████████
Petitioner: ██████ ██████

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Kevin Scully

HEARING DECISION

Following 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, telephone hearing was held on February 16, 2022. Petitioner represented herself. Andrea Edwards represented the Department of Health and Human Services (Department).

ISSUE

Did the Department of Health and Human Services (Department) properly determine that the Petitioner did not meet the disability standard for State Disability Assistance (SDA)?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. Petitioner applied for State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits on ██████
████████████████████
2. On May 1, 2020, the Department determined that Petitioner's impairments prevented employment for 90 days or more. Exhibit A, p 42.
3. On July 19, 2019, a consultative physician determined that Petitioner could occasionally lift 20 pounds, frequently lift less than 10 pounds, and stand less than 2 hours in an 8-hour workday. Exhibit A, p 56.
4. On July 19, 2019, the Department determined that Petitioner's impairments prevent employment for 90 days or more. Exhibit A, pp 53-54.

5. On May 1, 2020, the Department determined that Petitioner's impairments prevent employment for 90 days or more. Exhibit A, pp 42-43.
6. On October 27, 2021, the Department determined that the Petitioner did not meet the disability standard for State Disability Assistance (SDA) because it determined that she is capable of performing other work. Exhibit A, pp 22-23.
7. On November 2, 2021, the Department sent Petitioner notice that her cash assistance would close effective December 1, 2021. Exhibit A, p 10.
8. On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the Department received the Petitioner's hearing request, protesting the denial of disability benefits. Exhibit A, p 4.
9. The Petitioner testified that she had applied for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits with the Social Security Administration (SSA).
10. Petitioner testified that the Social Security Administration (SSA) denied the Petitioner's federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) application and the Petitioner reported that an SSI appeal is pending.
11. The Petitioner is a [REDACTED] year-old woman whose birth date is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
12. Petitioner is [REDACTED] tall and weighs [REDACTED] pounds.
13. The Petitioner attended school through the 9th grade.
14. The Petitioner is able to read and write and does have basic math skills.
15. The Petitioner was not engaged in substantial gainful activity at any time relevant to this matter.
16. The Petitioner has past relevant work experience as a cook where she was required to lift 50 pounds occasionally and stand for 8 hours.
17. Petitioner has past relevant work experience as a home health aide nurse where she was required to life and transfer patients.
18. The Petitioner's disability claim is based on arthritis, obesity, knee fracture and replacement, anterior cruciate ligament injury, back impairments, hypertension, depression, anxiety. Exhibit A, p 21.
19. Petitioner has undergone total replacement of both knees.

20. On January 16, 2020, a treating physician determined that Petitioner suffers from mild to moderate lumbar spondylosis, moderate-sized intra-foraminal disc herniation, and small to moderate partially intra-foraminal disc herniation.
21. On December 11, 2020, a treating physician prescribed a back brace with a hard back. Exhibit A, p 101.
22. Petitioner suffered a right ankle Achilles tendon rupture and was instructed by treating physicians that she could resume usual activity. Exhibit A, pp 1418-1420.
23. Petitioner has been diagnosed with anxiety and depression. Exhibit A, p 437.
24. On July 13, 2019, a psychologist determined that Petitioner is capable of socially interacting, following instructions, performing work related activities and organizational procedures. Exhibit A, p 1412.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

The regulations governing the hearing and appeal process for applicants and recipients of public assistance in Michigan are found in the Michigan Administrative Code, Rule 400.901 - 400.951. An opportunity for a hearing shall be granted to an applicant who requests a hearing because her claim for assistance has been denied. Mich Admin Code, R 400.903. Clients have the right to contest a Department decision affecting eligibility or benefit levels whenever it is believed that the decision is incorrect. The Department will provide an administrative hearing to review the decision and determine the appropriateness of that decision. Department of Health and Human Services Bridges Administrative Manual (BAM) 600 (January 1, 2020), pp 1-44.

The State Disability Assistance (SDA) program is established by the Social Welfare Act, MCL 400.1-.119b. The Department of Health and Human Services (formerly known as the Department of Human Services) administers the SDA program pursuant to 42 CFR 435, MCL 400.10 and Mich Admin Code, R 400.3151-.3180.

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 Medical Assistance and State Disability Assistance (SDA) programs. Under SSI, disability is defined as:

...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.

When determining disability, the federal regulations require that several considerations be analyzed in sequential order.

STEP 1

Does the client perform Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA)? If yes, the client is not disabled.

At step 1, a determination is made on whether the Petitioner is engaging in substantial gainful activity (20 CFR 404.1520(b) and 416.920(b)). Substantial gainful activity (SGA) is defined as work activity that is both substantial and gainful. "Substantial work activity" is work activity that involves doing significant physical or mental activities (20 CFR 404.1572(a) and 416.972(a)). "Gainful work activity" is work that is usually done for pay or profit, whether or not a profit is realized (20 CFR 404.1572(b) and 416.972(b)). Generally, if an individual has earnings from employment or self-employment above a specific level set out in the regulations, it is presumed that she has demonstrated the ability to engage in SGA (20 CFR 404.1574, 404.1575, 416.974, and 416.975). If an individual engages in SGA, she is not disabled regardless of how severe her physical or mental impairments are and regardless of her age, education, and work experience. If the individual is not engaging in SGA, the analysis proceeds to the second step.

The Petitioner testified that she has not been employed over eight years and that she is not currently engaged in substantial gainful activity, which was not disputed by the Department during the hearing. Therefore, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the Petitioner is not engaged in substantial gainful activity and is not disqualified from receiving disability at Step 1.

STEP 2

Does the client have a severe impairment that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more or result in death? If no, the client is not disabled.

At step two, a determination is made whether the Petitioner has a medically determinable impairment that is "severe" or a combination of impairments that is "severe" (20 CFR 404.1520(c) and 416.920(c)). An impairment or combination of impairments is "severe" within the meaning of the regulations if it significantly limits an individual's ability to perform basic work activities. An impairment or combination of impairments is "not severe" when medical and other evidence establish only a slight abnormality or a combination of slight abnormalities that would have no more than a minimal effect on an individual's ability to work (20 CFR 404.1521 and 416.921). If the Petitioner does not have a severe medically determinable impairment or combination of impairments, she is not disabled. If the Petitioner has a severe impairment or combination of impairments, the analysis proceeds to the third step.

The Petitioner has the burden of proof of establishing that she has a severely restrictive physical or mental impairment that prevents employment for more than 90 days.

The Petitioner is a [REDACTED] year-old woman that is [REDACTED]" tall and weighs [REDACTED] pounds. The Petitioner alleges disability due to arthritis, obesity, knee fracture and replacement, anterior cruciate ligament injury, back impairments, hypertension, depression, anxiety.

The objective medical evidence indicates the following:

Petitioner has undergone total knee replacement of both knees. Petitioner suffered a right ankle Achilles tendon rupture and was instructed by treating physicians that she could resume usual activity. Petitioner suffers from mild to moderate lumbar spondylosis, moderate-sized intra foraminal disc herniation, and small to moderate partially intra-foraminal disc herniation. Petitioner was prescribed a back brace with a hard back.

Petitioner has been diagnosed with anxiety and depression. A psychologist determined that Petitioner is capable of socially interacting, following instructions, performing work related activities and organizational procedures.

The evidence on the record indicates that the Petitioner's was been diagnosed with a ruptured Achilles tendon, bilateral knee replacement, and back impairments, which have resulted in significant impairments to her ability to stand and perform work related activities.

This Administrative Law Judge finds a physical impairment that has more than a de minimus effect on the Petitioner's ability to perform work activities. The Petitioner is not disqualified from receiving disability benefits at step 2 and the analysis will continue.

STEP 3

Does the impairment appear on a special listing of impairments or are the client's symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings at least equivalent in severity to the set of medical findings specified for the listed impairment? If no, the analysis continues to Step 4.

At step three, a determination is made whether the Petitioner's impairment or combination of impairments is of a severity to meet or medically equal the criteria of an impairment listed in 20 CFR Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 1 (20 CFR 404.1520(d), 404.1525, 404.1526, 416.920(d), 416.925, and 416.926). If the Petitioner's impairment or combination of impairments is of a severity to meet or medically equal the criteria of a listing and meets the duration requirement (20 CFR 404.1509 and 416.909), the Petitioner is disabled. If it does not, the analysis proceeds to the next step.

Petitioner's impairments fail to meet the listing for arthritis under section 14.09 Inflammatory Arthritis, because the objective medical evidence does not demonstrate an impairment involving a weight-bearing joint and resulting in an inability to ambulate effectively. The objective evidence does not support a finding that the Claimant lacks the ability to perform fine and gross movements with each upper extremity.

Petitioner's knee and ankle impairments do not meet the listing under section 1.18 Abnormality of a major joint in any extremity because the objective medical evidence does not demonstrate an ongoing need for a walker, bilateral canes, or bilateral crutches or a wheeled and seated mobility device.

The impairments to Petitioner's back to not meet the listing under section 1.16 Lumbar spinal stenosis because the objective medical evidence does not demonstrate an ongoing need for a walker, bilateral canes, or bilateral crutches, or a wheeled and seated mobility device.

The effects of hypertension are most readily observed through its impairments of other body systems. The Claimant's impairment does not meet a listing for hypertension. The objective medical evidence indicates that medical evidence does not support a finding of a severe impairment of a body system secondary severe hypertension.

Petitioner's impairments failed to meet the listing for depression under section 12.04 Depressive disorders because the objective medical evidence does not establish marked impairments of her ability to understand, remember, or apply information, interact with others, or concentrate, persist, or maintain pace. The objective medical evidence indicates that medical evidence does not establish that Petitioner has minimal capacity to adapt to changes in her environment or to demands that are not part of her daily life. The hearing record supports a finding that Petitioner is capable of socially interacting, following instructions, performing work related activities and organization procedures.

Petitioner's impairments failed to meet the listing for anxiety under section 12.06 anxiety disorders because the objective medical evidence does not establish marked impairments of her ability to understand, remember, or apply information, interact with others, or concentrate, persist, or maintain pace. The objective medical evidence indicates that medical evidence does not establish that Petitioner has minimal capacity to adapt to changes in her environment or to demands that are not part of her daily life. The hearing record supports a finding that Petitioner is capable of socially interacting, following instructions, performing work related activities and organization procedures.

The medical evidence of the Petitioner's condition does not give rise to a finding that she would meet a statutory listing in federal code of regulations 20 CFR Part 404, Subpart P, Appendix 1.

STEP 4

Can the client do the former work that she performed within the last 15 years? If yes, the client is not disabled.

Before considering step four of the sequential evaluation process, a determination is made of the Petitioner's residual functional capacity (20 CFR 404.1520(e) and 416.920(c)). An individual's residual functional capacity is her ability to do physical and mental work activities on a sustained basis despite limitations from her impairments. In making this finding, the undersigned must consider all of the Petitioner's impairments, including impairments that are not severe (20 CFR 404.1520(e), 404.1545, 416.920(e), and 416.945; SSR 96-8p).

Next, a determination is made on whether the Petitioner has the residual functional capacity to perform the requirements of her past relevant work (20 CFR 404.1520(f) and

416.920(f)). The term past relevant work means work performed (either as the Petitioner actually performed it or as it is generally performed in the national economy) within the last 15 years or 15 years prior to the date that disability must be established. In addition, the work must have lasted long enough for the Petitioner to learn to do the job and have been SGA (20 CFR 404.1560(b), 404.1565, 416.960(b), and 416.965). If the Petitioner has the residual functional capacity to do her past relevant work, the Petitioner is not disabled. If the Petitioner 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.

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).

To determine the skills required in the national economy of work you are able to do, occupations are classified as unskilled, semi-skilled, and skilled. These terms have the same meaning as defined in. 20 CFR 416.968.

Unskilled work. Unskilled work is work which needs little or no judgment to do simple duties that can be learned on the job in a short period of time. The job may or may not require considerable strength. For example, we consider jobs unskilled if the primary work duties are handling, feeding and offbearing (that is, placing or removing materials from machines which are automatic or operated by others), or machine tending, and a person can usually learn to do the job in 30 days, and little specific vocational preparation and judgment are needed. A person does not gain work skills by doing unskilled jobs. 20 CFR 416.968(a).

The objective medical evidence indicates that Petitioner has a history of a ruptured Achilles tendon and has undergone replacement of her knee joints. Petitioner's weight further impairs her ability to stand on her surgically repaired legs.

However, the hearing record does not support a finding that Petitioner's physical impairments prevent her from standing occasionally, or from lifting objects weighing 10 pounds. Therefore, Petitioner is capable of performing sedentary work.

Petitioner suffers from depression and anxiety, but the objective medical evidence indicates that Petitioner is capable of socially interacting, following instructions,

performing work related activities and organizational procedures. The hearing record supports a finding that Petitioner is capable of performing unskilled work.

After careful consideration of the entire record, this Administrative Law Judge finds that the Petitioner has the residual functional capacity to perform light work as defined in 20 CFR 404.1567 and 416.967.

Petitioner has past relevant work experience as a home health nurse and a cook. Both of these jobs require considerable standing and lifting and exceed the classifications of light work.

There is no evidence upon which this Administrative Law Judge could base a finding that the Petitioner is able to perform work substantially similar to work performed in the past.

STEP 5

At Step 5, the burden of proof shifts to the Department to establish that the Petitioner has the Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) for Substantial Gainful Activity.

Does the client have the Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) to perform other work according to the guidelines set forth at 20 CFR 404, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Sections 200.00-204.00? If yes, client is not disabled.

At the last step of the sequential evaluation process (20 CFR 404.1520(g) and 416.920(g)), a determination is made whether the Petitioner is able to do any other work considering her residual functional capacity, age, education, and work experience. If the Petitioner is able to do other work, she is not disabled. If the Petitioner is not able to do other work and meets the duration requirement, she is disabled.

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).

The objective medical evidence indicates that the Petitioner has the residual functional capacity to perform some other less strenuous tasks than in her prior employment and that she is physically able to do less strenuous tasks if demanded of her. The Petitioner's testimony as to her limitations indicates that she should be able to perform sedentary work.

The Petitioner was able to answer all the questions at the hearing and was responsive to the questions. The Petitioner was oriented to time, person, and place during the hearing.

The Petitioner's complaints of pain, while profound and credible, are out of proportion to the objective medical evidence contained in the file as it relates to the Petitioner's ability to perform work.

Medical vocational guidelines have been developed and can be found in 20 CFR, Subpart P, Appendix 2, Section 200.00. When the facts coincide with a particular guideline, the guideline directs a conclusion as to disability. 20 CFR 416.969.

Petitioner is ■ years-old, a younger person, under age 50, with a limited education, and a history of unskilled work. Based on the objective medical evidence of record Petitioner has the residual functional capacity to perform sedentary work. State Disability Assistance (SDA) is denied using Vocational Rule 201.18 as a guideline.


The Department's Program Eligibility Manual contains the following policy statements and instructions for caseworkers regarding the State Disability Assistance program: to receive State Disability Assistance, a person must be disabled, caring for a disabled person or age 65 or older. Department of Human Services Bridges Eligibility Manual (BEM) 261 (April 1, 2017), pp 1-6. Because the Petitioner does not meet the definition of disabled under the MA-P program and because the evidence of record does not establish that the Petitioner is unable to work for a period exceeding 90 days, the Petitioner does not meet the disability criteria for State Disability Assistance benefits either.

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 Petitioner not disabled for purposes of the State Disability Assistance (SDA) benefits.

DECISION AND ORDER

Accordingly, the Department's determination is AFFIRMED.

KS/nr



Kevin Scully
Administrative Law Judge
Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings
and Rules (MOAHR)

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 Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules (MOAHR).

A party may request a rehearing or reconsideration of this Order if the request is received by MOAHR 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. MOAHR will not review any response to a request for rehearing/reconsideration.

A written request may be mailed or faxed to MOAHR. If submitted by fax, the written request must be faxed to (517) 763-0155; Attention: MOAHR Rehearing/Reconsideration Request.

If submitted by mail, the written request must be addressed as follows:

Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P.O. Box 30639
Lansing, Michigan 48909-8139

DHHS

Andrea Edwards
220 Fort St.
Port Huron, MI 48060

St. Clair County DHHS- via electronic mail

BSC2- via electronic mail

L. Karadsheh- via electronic mail

Petitioner

██████████ - via first class mail

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