



Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Appeals Office, 57 Howard Ave., LP Bldg, 2nd floor, Cranston, RI 02920
phone: 401.462.2132 fax 401.462.0458

Docket # 15-398
Hearing Date: April 7, 2015

Date: May 8, 2015



ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING DECISION

The Administrative Hearing that you requested has been decided against you upon a de novo (new and independent) review of the full record of hearing. During the course of the proceeding, the following issue(s) and Agency regulation(s) were the matters before the hearing:

**EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (EOHHS)
MEDICAID CODE OF ADMINISTRATIVE RULES (MCAR)
SECTION: 0352.15 ELIGIBILITY BASED ON DISABILITY**

The facts of your case, the Agency rules and regulations, and the complete administrative decision made in this matter follow. Your rights to judicial review of this decision are found on the last page.

Copies of this decision have been sent to the following: You (the appellant), and Agency representatives: Julie Hopkins RN, Kong Prak, and Rita Graterol.

Present at the hearing were: You (the appellant), and Jennifer Duhamel, RN (Agency representative).

EOHHS RULES AND REGULATIONS:

Please see the attached APPENDIX for pertinent excerpts from the Rhode Island Department of Human Services Policy Manual.

APPEAL RIGHTS:

Please see attached NOTICE OF APPELLATE RIGHTS at the end of this decision.

ISSUE: Is the appellant disabled for the purposes of the Medical Assistance Program (MA)?

TESTIMONY AT HEARING:

The Agency representative testified:

- In order to be eligible for Medical Assistance (MA) an applicant must be either aged (age 65 years or older), blind, or disabled.
- The Medical Assistance Review Team (MART) determines disability for the MA Program.
- The MART is comprised of public health nurses, a social worker and doctors specializing in internal medicine, surgery, psychology and vocational rehabilitation.
- The MART follows the same five-step evaluation as SSI for determining whether someone is disabled.
- To be considered disabled for the purposes of the Medical Assistance Program, the appellant must have a medically determinable impairment that is severe enough to render her incapable of any type of work, not necessarily her past work. In addition, the impairment must last, or be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than twelve (12) months.
- The MART reviewed an Agency MA-63 form (Physician's Examination Report), an Agency AP-70 form (Information for the Determination of Disability), and records of Quality Behavioral Health (QBH) and The Providence Center TPC).
- No consultative examination reports from her SSI case were accessible at the time of application.
- Records were also requested from Rhode Island Hospital, but none were available for the timeframe requested.
- A review of the available records revealed a diagnosis of mood disorder and a history of polysubstance abuse.
- QBH records consisted of four office notes documented between May and July 2014.
- She was being prescribed lithium and methadone.

- Notes mentioned post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and bipolar disorder, although there was no psychiatric assessment establishing either diagnosis.
- She was dealing with bereavement issues relative to the loss of her fiancé.
- TPC included notes about cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational treatment sessions.
- The primary goal of TPC treatment was relapse prevention.
- November progress notes addressed factors of recent relapse.
- In the December session notes her condition appeared to be stable, she was actively participating in group assignments, and was following all medication and treatment plans.
- Her specific medication regimen was not included in the available records.
- The evidence received did not support the existence of a medically determinable impairment that would limit functioning, meet the durational requirements, or have residual deficits when following prescribed treatment.
- She was not disabled for the purpose of the Medical Assistance program.

The appellant testified:

- She is currently unemployed.
- With treatment she has experienced some improvement in functioning.
- She still isolates, as she does not like to be around people.
- She is not very patient with others.
- She works best in a structured environment.
- She is currently age 41, has a GED high school equivalency, and lacks any significant past work experience.

- She had tried working at Job Lot, and as a pet groomer, but each job lasted for about one week.
- She has been suffering from symptoms of PTSD for about the last ten years.
- She has experienced symptoms of bipolar disorder all her life, although it was just diagnosed within the last year.
- She had tried several different medications over time, but just recently was prescribed the remedy that has worked best.
- She also attends counseling for therapy, and combines that with her relapse prevention program.
- In the past she was more inclined to self-medicate, because she had not found a treatment that adequately controlled her symptoms as her current regimen does.
- She has abstained from substances for six months.
- She expects to be coming off of methadone.
- She prefers not to go to the methadone clinic and be around active substance abusers.
- She attends her mental health therapy sessions every two weeks, and drug rehabilitation once per month.
- She had completed a full psychiatric evaluation at QBH within the past three years.
- In the past year, she also had a psychiatric evaluation performed at TPC with Dr SantaTeresa.
- She has not returned to QBH since last July when TPC took over her treatment.
- She frequently has difficulty remembering things without becoming confused.
- She has acquired some coping skills from treatment.
- Her daughter has noticed a change with respect to her ability to control volatility displayed in the past.

- She often does not complete tasks she begins, especially paperwork.
- She tries to write things down.
- She does journaling as an activity she enjoys.
- Even when she enjoys activities or hobbies, she cannot reliably stay focused long enough to complete them.
- She has not been regularly completing her journal and daily devotions which she once did every day.
- Improvements have occurred in certain areas, but do not necessarily include all mental activities.
- About two weeks ago, her doctor prescribed Strattera to improve her attention and concentration, but it is too soon to know how effective it will be.
- She believes that she is personable and nice to others, and always hopes she will receive the same treatment.
- However, she would worry every day before going to work that she would not get along with others in the workplace.
- At times her symptoms interfered with her ability to get up and get ready for work.
- She is now living in a sober house, and has no choice but to get out of bed, complete dressing and grooming, and to participate in some designated chores.
- She did have someone accompany her to the hearing location for support.
- She has not had a driver's license for ten years, and is somewhat fearful of trying to navigate the public transportation system.
- She has not recently been scheduled for any consultative examinations for her SSI case, but she did attend an evaluation some time ago.
- She does not know what the results were, and has not seen a copy of it.
- She requested to hold the record of hearing open for the submission of additional evidence.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

- The appellant filed an application for Medical Assistance (MA) on November 19, 2014.
- The Agency issued a written notice of denial of MA dated January 12, 2015.
- The appellant filed a timely request for hearing received by the Agency on February 6, 2015.
- Per the appellant's request, the record of hearing was held open through the close of business on May 5, 2015 for the submission of additional evidence.
- As of the close of business on May 5, 2015, no additional evidence had been received, and no requests for extension had been made by the appellant.
- As of the date of this decision, the MART had not withdrawn the notice under appeal.
- The appellant is not engaging in substantial gainful activity.
- The appellant's documented history of substance abuse disorder is currently in remission.
- The appellant did not meet her burden of proof to establish the existence of a severe medically determinable impairment secondary to substance abuse that would have a measurable impact on functional capabilities.
- The evidence has not established that the appellant is disabled as defined in the Social Security Act.
- The appellant is not disabled for the purposes of the Medical Assistance Program.

DISCUSSION OF THE MEDICAL EVIDENCE RECORD:

The record of hearing consists of:

- ✓ An Agency MA-63 dated December 26, 2014 and signed by Providence Center psychiatrist, Mary SantaTeresa, MD.
- ✓ An Agency AP-70 dated December 8, 2014 and signed by the appellant.
- ✓ Records of Quality Behavioral Health for May 21, 2014 to July 22, 2014.
- ✓ Records of The Providence Center for October 31, 2014 to December 16, 2014.
- ✓ Hearing testimony.

Medical and other evidence of an individual's impairment is treated consistent with (20 CFR 416.913). The record was held open to May 5, 2015 for the submission of updated progress notes from the Providence Center and complete evaluation of a psychiatrist from one or more sources. Release forms were prepared, and instructions in writing were sent to both parties. At the close of business on the agreed upon date, no new evidence had been received. The appellant did not request extension of the deadline to obtain additional information, and she allowed the evidence record of hearing to close without including those records that she had identified as missing.

According to 20 CFR 416.916 (If you fail to submit medical and other evidence): You must co-operate in furnishing us with, or in helping us to obtain or identify, available medical or other evidence about your impairment(s). When you fail to cooperate with us in obtaining evidence, we will have to make a decision based on the information available in your case. We will not excuse you from giving us evidence because you have religious or personal reasons against medical examinations, tests, or treatment.

All medical opinion evidence is evaluated in accordance with the factors set forth at (20 CFR 416.927). QBH notes include some patient complaints, brief observations of a clinician, and descriptions of assigned activities for 4 sessions within a period of two months. TPC records include short progress notes completed by a cognitive behavioral therapist for 2 ½ months, and do include some mental status evaluations. Although there are no substantive records from a treating source of frequency, length, nature, and extent of treatment, or from a physician specializing in psychology or psychiatry that would justify controlling weight of opinion, the available evidence and testimony are considered in combination for the purpose of this evaluation.

The MART is considered a non-examining source when expressing opinions regarding an individual's condition. At the time of application, the Agency was able to obtain treatment notes for a limited period of time. They found that at the time last documented, her condition was stable with good medication compliance and other treatment participation. As a result, they were unable to establish the existence of a severe impairment that could reasonably be expected to last for twelve months. Their evaluation ended at step two.

The appellant has alleged that symptoms of PTSD and bipolar disorder impair her. The records also add information regarding treatment for ADHD, and polysubstance abuse, as well as a psychiatrist's opinion that assessment for mood disorder should be completed. No physical impairments were indicated.

A review of the available records reveals the appellant's struggle with substance abuse, and her effort to find the right treatment to manage her mental symptoms, especially depressive symptoms secondary to adverse life events. She testified that she had finally started a medication regimen which had resulted in some improvement. She explained how her daughter noticed the change, and seemed relieved that she was better able to control her emotions, and reduce outbursts that had previously troubled her. Finding less reason to self-medicate, and with the support of methadone maintenance, she was optimistic about her progress. Additionally, she alleged that she had sustained sobriety for six months, and that finding a sober living arrangement had forced her to keep a more regimented schedule.

The last report of record from TPC dated December 16, 2014, included a mental status evaluation describing her as calm and cooperative, with full range of affect, coherent speech, and a linear thought process. There were no sleep disturbances, and appetite and energy level were normal. She presented with no language abnormalities, fund of knowledge was average, she was alert, memory was intact, and judgment and insight were adequate. Her current treatment plan was to be continued.

When TPC psychiatrist completed the agency MA-63 form later that month, she based mental activity restrictions on cocaine and opioid dependence and benzodiazepine and amphetamine abuse. Although the doctor did affirm that she was evaluating for mood disorder, there are no supporting records of the evaluation, and no conclusions to establish that an actual diagnosis was made. Therefore, when the psychiatrist opined about the mental activity limitations that would result from her disorders, it appeared that the restrictions were directly related to substance abuse, as no other impairment had been supported.

The medical evidence record, as it stands on this date, lacks acceptable clinical and diagnostic evidence to support the claims of PTSD, bipolar disorder and ADHD. That being the case, there are no proven impairments secondary to polysubstance addiction that would demonstrate whether or not behavioral or physical changes have resulted from the regular use of substances that affect the central nervous system.

Under Public Law 104-121, an individual cannot be considered disabled if drug addiction and/or alcoholism (DA&A) are contributing factors material to the disability determination. Determination of the material nature of DA&A (if applicable) is made according to (20 CFR 416.935) only if there is first a finding of disability resulting from the sequential evaluation process..

CONCLUSION:

In order to be eligible for Medical Assistance (MA) benefits, an individual must be either aged (65 years or older), blind, or disabled. When the individual is clearly not aged or blind and the claim of disability has been made, the Agency reviews the evidence in order to determine the presence of a characteristic of eligibility for the Medical Assistance Program based upon disability. Disability is defined as the inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment or combination of impairments that can be expected to result in death or that has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than twelve (12) months.

Under the authority of the Social Security Act, the Social Security Administration has established a **five-step** sequential evaluation process for determining whether or not an individual is disabled (20 CFR 416.920). DHS policy directs that disability determination for the purposes of the MA program shall be determined according to the Social Security sequential evaluation process. The individual claimant bears the burden of meeting steps one through four, while the burden shifts to DHS to meet step five. The steps must be followed in sequence. If it is determined that the individual is disabled or is not disabled at a step of the evaluation process, the evaluation will not go on to the next step. If it cannot be determined that the individual is disabled or not disabled at a step, the evaluation continues to the next step.

Step one: A determination is made if the individual is engaging in substantial gainful activity (20 CFR 416.920(b)). Substantial gainful activity (SGA) is defined as work activity that is both substantial and gainful. Substantial work activity is work that involves doing significant physical or mental activities (20 CFR 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 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 he/she has demonstrated the ability to engage in SGA (20 CFR 416.974 and 416.975). If an individual is actually engaging in SGA, he/she will not be found disabled, regardless of how severe his/her physical or mental impairments are, and regardless of his/her age, education and work experience. If the individual is not engaging in SGA, the analysis proceeds to the second step.

The appellant has testified that she is not currently working. For the past fifteen years, she has reported only brief, unsuccessful work attempts not rising to the level of substantial gainful activity. As there is no evidence that the appellant is engaging in SGA, the evaluation continues to step two.

Step two: A determination is made whether the individual has a medically determinable impairment that is severe, or a combination of impairments that is severe (20 CFR 416.920(c)) and whether the impairment has lasted or is expected to last for a continuous period of at least twelve months (20 CFR 416.909). If the durational standard is not met, he/she is not disabled. An impairment or combination of impairments is not severe within the meaning of the regulations if it does not significantly limit an individual's physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities. Examples of basic work activities are listed at (20 CFR 416.921(b)). A physical or mental impairment must be established by medical evidence consisting of signs, symptoms, and laboratory findings, not only by the individual's statement of symptoms. Symptoms, signs and laboratory findings are defined as set forth in (20 CFR 416.928). In determining severity, consideration is given to the combined effect of all of the individual's impairments without regard to whether any single impairment, if considered separately, would be of sufficient severity (20 CFR 416.923). If a medically severe combination of impairments is found, the combined impact of the impairments will be considered throughout the disability determination process. If the individual does not have a severe medically determinable impairment or combination of impairments, he/she will not be found disabled. Factors including age, education and work experience are not considered at step two. Step two is a *de minimis* standard. Thus, in any case where an impairment (or multiple impairments considered in combination) has more than a minimal effect on an individual's ability to perform one or more basic work activities, adjudication must continue beyond step two in the sequential evaluation process.

The appellant has alleged that she is disabled by a combination of mental disorders impacting her functioning. No specific mental diagnoses have been supported by the evidence. Additionally, she has also testified that her efforts to find treatment have led to a noticeable improvement of symptoms and a significant period of sobriety.

At step two of the sequential evaluation, the appellant bears the burden of proof. The record, as it exists, reveals that the appellant has not met her burden of proof relative to the requirement to support allegations of disability with acceptable clinical and diagnostic medical evidence. Although the evidence has noted conditions to be evaluated, the records do not establish that a medically determinable impairment with a measurable impact on functional ability exists. Therefore, the sequential evaluation of disability ends at Step two.

After careful and considerate review of the Agency's policies as well as the evidence and testimony submitted, this Appeals Officer concludes that the appellant is not disabled as defined in the Social Security Act, and for the purpose of the Medical Assistance Program.

Pursuant to DHS Policy General Provisions section 0110.60.05, action required by this decision, if any, completed by the Agency representative must be confirmed in writing to this Hearing Officer.



Carol J. Ouellette
Appeals Officer

APPENDIX

0352.15 ELIGIBILITY BASED ON DISABILITY

REV:07/2010

- A. To qualify for Medical Assistance, an individual or member of a couple must be age 65 years or older, blind or disabled.
- B. The Department evaluates disability for Medical Assistance in accordance with applicable law including the Social Security Act and regulations (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.901-416.998).
 - 1. For any adult to be eligible for Medical Assistance because of a disability, he/she must be unable 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 twelve (12) months (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.905).
 - 2. The medical impairment must make the individual unable to do his/her past relevant work (which is defined as "work that you have done within the past 15 years, that was substantial gainful activity, and that lasted long enough for you to learn to do it" (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.960(b)) or any other substantial gainful employment that exists in the national economy (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.905).
 - 3. The physical or mental impairment must result from anatomical, physiological, or psychological abnormalities which can be shown by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques. The individual's statements alone are not enough to show the existence of impairments (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.908).

0352.15.05 Determination of Disability

REV:07/2010

- A. Individuals who receive RSDI or SSI based on disability meet the criteria for disability.
 - 1. A copy of the award letter or similar documentation from the Social Security Administration is acceptable verification of the disability characteristic.
 - 2. For individuals who were receiving SSI based on disability and were closed upon entrance into a group care facility because their income exceeds the SSI standard for individuals in group care, a copy of the SSI award letter serves as verification of the disability characteristic.

- B. For all others, a disability review must be completed and a positive finding of disability must be made before eligibility for MA based on disability can be established.
1. In such cases, it is the responsibility of the agency representative to provide the applicant with the following:
 - a. Form letter AP-125, explaining the disability review process
 - b. Form MA-63, the Physician Examination Report with instructions
 - c. Form AP-70, the applicant's report of Information for Determination of Disability
 - d. Three copies of form DHS-25M, Release of Medical Information
 - e. A pre-addressed return envelope
 2. When returned to DHS, the completed forms and/or other medical or social data are date stamped and promptly transmitted under cover of form AP-65 to the MA Review Team (MART).
 - a. If the completed forms are not received within thirty (30) days of application, a reminder notice is sent to the applicant stating medical evidence of their disability has not been provided and needs to be submitted as soon as possible.
 - b. If all completed forms are not received within forty-five (45) days from the date of application, the referral to MART is made with the documentation received as of that date.
 3. It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide medical and other information and evidence required for a determination of disability.
 - a. The applicant's physician may submit copies of diagnostic tests which support the finding of disability.
 - b. The physician may also choose to submit a copy of the applicant's medical records or a letter which includes all relevant information (in lieu of or in addition to the MA-63).

0352.15.10 Responsibility of the MART

REV:07/2010

- A. The Medical Assistance Review Team (MART) is responsible to:
1. Make every reasonable effort to assist the applicant in obtaining any additional medical reports needed to make a disability decision.
 - a. Every reasonable effort is defined as one initial and, if necessary, one follow-up request for information.
 - b. The applicant must sign a release of information giving the MART permission to request the information from each potential source in order to receive this assistance.
 2. Analyze the complete medical data, social findings, and other evidence of disability submitted by or on behalf of the applicant.

3. Provide written notification to the applicant when a decision on MA eligibility cannot be issued within the ninety (90) day time frame because a medical provider delays or fails to provide information needed to determine disability.
 4. Issue a decision on whether the applicant meets the criteria for disability based on the evidence submitted following the five-step evaluation process detailed below.
 - a. The decision regarding disability is recorded on the AP-65 and transmitted along with the MART case log to the appropriate DHS field office where the agency representative issues a decision on MA eligibility.
 - b. All medical and social data is retained by the MART.
- B. To assure that disability reviews are conducted with uniformity, objectivity, and expeditiously, a five-step evaluation process is followed when determining whether or not an adult individual is disabled.
1. The individual claimant bears the burden of meeting Steps 1 through 4, but the burden shifts to DHS at Step 5.
 - a. The steps must be followed in sequence.
 - b. If the Department can find that the individual is disabled or is not disabled at a step of the evaluation process, the evaluation will not go on to the next step.
 - c. If the Department cannot determine that the individual is disabled or not disabled at a step, the evaluation will go on to the next step (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.920).
 2. Step 1
A determination is made if the individual is engaging in substantial gainful activity (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.920(b)). If an individual is actually engaging in substantial gainful activity, the Department will find that he/she is not disabled. "Substantial gainful activity" is defined at 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.972.
 3. Step 2
A determination is made whether the individual has a medically determinable impairment that is severe, or a combination of impairments that is severe (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.920(c)) and whether the impairment has lasted or is expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.909). If the durational standard is not met, the Department will find that he/she is not disabled.
 - a. An impairment or combination of impairments is not severe within the meaning of the regulations if it does not significantly limit an individual's physical or mental ability to perform basic work activities (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.921). Examples of basic work activities are listed at 20 CFR sec. 416.921(b)).
 - b. In determining severity, the Department considers the combined effect of all of an individual's impairments without regard to whether any such impairment, if considered separately, would be sufficient severity (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.923).

- i. If the Department finds a medically severe combination of impairments, then the combined impact of the impairments will be considered throughout the disability determination process.
 - ii. If the individual does not have a severe medically determinable impairment or combination of impairments, the Department will find that he/she is not disabled.
 - c. The Department will not consider the individual's age, education, or work experience at Step 2.
 - d. Step 2 is a de minimis standard. In any case where an impairment (or multiple impairments considered in combination) has more than a minimal effect on the individual's ability to perform one or more basic work activities, adjudication must continue beyond Step 2 in the sequential evaluation process.
4. Step 3
A determination is made whether the individual's impairment or combination of impairments meet or medically equal the criteria of an impairment listed in the Social Security Administration's Listings of Impairments (20 C.F.R. Pt 404, Appendix 1 to Subpart P).
 - a. If the individual's impairment or combination of impairments meets or medically equals the criteria of a listing and meets the duration requirement, the individual is disabled.
 - b. If it does not, the analysis proceeds to the next step.
5. Step 4
A determination is made as to the individual's residual functional capacity (RFC) and whether, given the RFC, he/she can perform his/her past relevant work (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.920(e)).
 - a. An individual's RFC is his/her ability to do physical and mental work activities on a sustained basis despite limitations from his/her impairments.
 - i. In making this finding, all of the individual's impairments, including impairments that are not severe will be considered (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.920(e), 416.945, and Social Security Ruling ("S.S.R.") 96-8p as applicable and effective).
 - ii. The Department will assess the individual's RFC in accordance with 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.945 based on all of the relevant medical and other evidence, including evidence regarding his/her symptoms (such as pain) as outlined in 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.929(c).
 - b. It must be established whether the individual has the RFC to perform the requirements of his/her past relevant work either as he/she has actually performed it or as it is generally performed in the national economy.

- c. The Department will use the guidelines in 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.960 through 416.969, and consider the RFC assessment together with the information about the individual's vocational background to make a disability decision. Further, in assessing the individual's RFC, the Department will determine his/her physical work capacity using the classifications sedentary, light, medium, heavy and very heavy as those terms are defined in 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.967 and elaborated on in S.S.R. 83-10, as applicable and effective.
 - d. If the individual has the RFC to do his/her past relevant work, the individual is not disabled. If the individual is unable to do any past relevant work, the analysis proceeds to the fifth and final step in the process.
6. Step 5
- The Department considers the individual's RFC, together with his/her age, education and work experience, to determine if he/she can make an adjustment to other work in the national economy (20 C.F.R. sec. 416.920(g)).
- a. At Step 5, the Department may determine if the individual is disabled by applying certain medical-vocational guidelines (also referred to as the "Grids", 20 C.F.R. Pt. 404, Appendix 2 to Subpart P).
 - i. The medical-vocational tables determine disability based on the individual's maximum level of exertion, age, education and prior work experience.
 - ii. There are times when the Department cannot use the medical-vocational tables because the individual's situation does not fit squarely into the particular categories or his/her RFC includes significant non-exertional limitations on his/her work capacity. Non-exertional limitations include mental, postural, manipulative, visual, communicative or environmental restrictions.
 - b. If the individual is able to make an adjustment to other work, he/she is not disabled.
 - c. If the individual is not able to do other work, he/she is determined disabled.

0352.15.15 Evidence

REV:07/2010

- A. Medical and other evidence of an individual's impairment is treated consistent with 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.913.
- B. The Department evaluates all medical opinion evidence in accordance with the factors set forth at 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.927.

- C. Evidence that is submitted or obtained by the Department may contain medical opinions.
1. "Medical opinions" are statements from physicians and psychologists or other acceptable medical sources that reflect judgments about the nature and severity of an individual's impairments, including:
 - a. Symptoms
 - b. Diagnosis and prognosis
 - c. What the individual can do despite impairments
 - d. Physical or mental restrictions
 2. Medical opinions include those from the following:
 - a. Treating sources - such as the individual's own physician, psychiatrist or psychologist
 - b. Non-treating sources - such as a physician, psychiatrist or psychologist who examines the individual to provide an opinion but does not have an ongoing treatment relationship with him/her
 - c. Non-examining sources - such as a physician, psychiatrist or psychologist who has not examined the individual but provides a medical opinion in the case
 3. A treating source's opinion on the nature and severity of an individual's impairment will be given controlling weight if the Department finds it is well-supported by medically acceptable clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques and is not inconsistent with the other substantial evidence in the case record.
 - a. If a treating source's opinion is not given controlling weight, it will still be considered and evaluated using the same factors applied to examining and non-examining source opinions.
 - b. The appeals officer will give good reasons in the administrative hearing decision for the weight given to a treating source's opinion.
 4. The Department evaluates examining and non-examining medical source opinions by considering all of the following factors:
 - a. Examining relationship
 - b. Nature, extent, and length of treatment relationship
 - c. Supportability of opinion and its consistency with record as a whole
 - d. Specialization of medical source
 - e. Other factors which tend to support or contradict the opinion.
 - f. If a hearing officer has found that a treating source's opinion is not due controlling weight under the rule set out in the foregoing paragraph, he/she will apply these factors in determining the weight of such opinion.
 - g. Consistent with the obligation to conduct a de novo (or new and independent) review of an application at the administrative hearing, the appeals officer will consider any statements or opinions of the Medical Assistance Review Team (MART) to be a non-examining source opinion and evaluate such statements or opinions applying the factors set forth at 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.927(f).

- D. Symptoms, signs and laboratory findings are defined as set forth in 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.928.
- E. The Department evaluates symptoms, including pain, in accordance with the standards set forth at 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.929 and elaborated on in S.S.R. 96-7p, as applicable and effective.

0352.15.20 Drug Addiction and Alcohol

REV:07/2010

- A. If the Department finds that the individual is disabled and has medical evidence of his/her drug addiction or alcoholism, the Department must determine whether the individual's drug addiction or alcoholism is a contributing factor material to the determination of disability; unless eligibility for benefits is found because of age or blindness.
 - 1. The key factor the Department will examine in determining whether drug addiction or alcoholism is a contributing factor material to the determination of disability is whether the Department would still find the individual disabled if he/she stopped using drugs or alcohol.
 - 2. The Department applies the standards set forth in 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.935 when making this determination.

0352.15.25 Need to Follow Prescribed Treatment

REV:07/2010

- A. In order to get MA benefits, the individual must follow treatment prescribed by his/her physician if this treatment can restore his/her ability to work.
 - 1. If the individual does not follow the prescribed treatment without a good reason, the Department will not find him/her disabled.
 - 2. The Department will consider the individual's physical, mental, educational, and linguistic limitations (including any lack of facility with the English language) and determine if he/she has an acceptable reason for failure to follow prescribed treatment in accordance with 20 C.F.R. sec.416.930.
 - 3. Although the question must be evaluated based on the specific facts developed in each case, examples of acceptable reasons for failing to follow prescribed treatment can be found in 20 C.F.R. sec. 416.930(c) and S.S.R. 82-59, as applicable and effective.

352.15.30 Conduct of the Hearing

REV:07/2010

- A. Any individual denied Medical Assistance based on the MA Review Team's decision that the disability criteria has not been met, retains the right to appeal the decision in accordance with Section 0110; COMPLAINTS AND HEARINGS in the DHS General Provisions.
1. A hearing will be convened in accordance with Department policy and a written decision will be rendered by the Appeals officer upon a de novo review of the full record of hearing.
 2. The hearing must be attended by a representative of the MART and by the individual and/or his/her representative.

NOTICE OF APPELLATE RIGHTS

This Final Order constitutes a final order of the Department of Human Services pursuant to RI General Laws §42-35-12. Pursuant to RI General Laws §42-35-15, a final order may be appealed to the Superior Court sitting in and for the County of Providence within thirty (30) days of the mailing date of this decision. Such appeal, if taken, must be completed by filing a petition for review in Superior Court. The filing of the complaint does not itself stay enforcement of this order. The agency may grant, or the reviewing court may order, a stay upon the appropriate terms.