

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
OKLAHOMA

A. N. S. v. Frank Bisignano

A. N. S. v. Bisignano, No. CIV-25-374-HE (W.D. Okla. Mar. 30, 2026) (report and recommendation) · No. CIV-25-374-HE · Decided March 30, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma considers a Social Security claimant’s challenge to the denial of disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income. The magistrate judge recommends reversing and remanding because the administrative law judge inadequately evaluated the claimant’s subjective symptoms, relying on conclusory findings and misleading descriptions of her childcare and part-time work activities. The recommendation does not reach the claimant’s remaining arguments.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma
WRITING FOR THE COURT	United States Magistrate Judge
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma
DECIDED	March 30, 2026
DOCKET	CIV-25-374-HE
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Report and recommendation on judicial review of the Social Security Administration's denial of disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews whether the Commissioner's factual findings are supported by substantial evidence and whether the correct legal standards were applied. The court may not reweigh the evidence or substitute its judgment for the agency's, but must determine whether the administrative record contains sufficient evidence to support the agency's factual determinations.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	A. N. S. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner, Social Security Administration

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

disability definition

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ properly evaluated Plaintiff's statements concerning the intensity, persistence, and limiting effects of her symptoms.
2. Whether the ALJ's decision was supported by substantial evidence and applied the correct legal standards.
3. Whether the court should reach Plaintiff's remaining challenges to the medical-opinion evidence and the ALJ's step-five determination.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ's evaluation of Plaintiff's subjective symptoms was legally insufficient because the ALJ relied on a conclusory finding of inconsistency and misleading characterizations of Plaintiff's childcare and part-time work activities, without adequately considering the relevant subjective and objective evidence.
2. The Commissioner's decision should be reversed and remanded for further administrative proceedings; the magistrate judge did not reach Plaintiff's remaining claims because they could be affected by the proceedings on remand.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Findings as to credibility should be closely and affirmatively linked to substantial evidence and not just a conclusion in the guise of findings."

"A decision not supported by substantial evidence must be reversed."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff applied for disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income, alleging disabling symptoms including back and neck pain, headaches, sleep disturbance, asthma, anxiety, and depression. The ALJ found severe impairments including lumbar degenerative disc disease, scoliosis, allergy-induced asthma, anxiety disorder, and major depressive disorder, but determined that Plaintiff could perform other work existing in significant numbers in the national economy. In evaluating Plaintiff's symptoms, the ALJ relied in part on Plaintiff's ability to raise two children and work part time, without adequately accounting for the substantial assistance Plaintiff received with childcare or explaining how five to ten hours of weekly work undermined her disability allegations.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The SSA denied Plaintiff's applications initially and on reconsideration. An ALJ issued an unfavorable decision on June 20, 2024, finding Plaintiff not disabled under the five-step sequential evaluation process, and the Appeals Council denied review. The magistrate judge, to whom the matter was referred under 28 U.S.C. § 636, recommended reversing the Commissioner's decision and remanding for further administrative proceedings because the ALJ inadequately evaluated Plaintiff's subjective symptoms.

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The Commissioner should conduct further administrative proceedings, including a legally adequate evaluation of Plaintiff's statements concerning the intensity, persistence, and limiting effects of her symptoms. The recommendation does not prescribe a particular ultimate disability determination.

CASES CITED

- Wall v. Astrue, 561 F.3d 1048, 1052 (10th Cir. 2009)
- Noreja v. Commissioner, SSA, 952 F.3d 1172, 1177-78 (10th Cir. 2020)
- Keyes-Zachary v. Astrue, 695 F.3d 1156, 1167 (10th Cir. 2012)
- Vigil v. Colvin, 805 F.3d 1199, 1201 (10th Cir. 2015)
- Biestek v. Berryhill, 587 U.S. 97, 102-03 (2019)
- Lax v. Astrue, 489 F.3d 1080, 1084 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Hamlin v. Barnhart, 365 F.3d 1208, 1214 (10th Cir. 2004)
- Luna v. Bowen, 834 F.2d 161, 163-65 (10th Cir. 1987)
- Brownrigg v. Berryhill, 688 F. App'x 542, 545-46 (10th Cir. 2017)
- Huston v. Bowen, 838 F.2d 1125, 1130, 1133 (10th Cir. 1988)
- Krauser v. Astrue, 638 F.3d 1324, 1332-33 (10th Cir. 2011)
- Sitsler v. Astrue, 410 F. App'x 112, 117-18 (10th Cir. 2011)
- Frey v. Bowen, 816 F.2d 508, 516-17 (10th Cir. 1987)
- Thompson v. Sullivan, 987 F.2d 1482, 1490 (10th Cir. 1993)
- Kepler v. Chater, 68 F.3d 387, 391 (10th Cir. 1995)
- Watkins v. Barnhart, 350 F.3d 1297, 1299 (10th Cir. 2003)
- Winfrey v. Chater, 92 F.3d 1017, 1021 (10th Cir. 1996)
- Nicholas E. v. Bisignano, No. CIV-24-1079-ALM, 2025 WL 2412339, at *5 (W.D. Okla. Aug. 20, 2025)
- Moore v. United States, 950 F.2d 656, 659 (10th Cir. 1991)