

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

M.M. v. Martin O'Malley

Matsui v. O'Malley, No. 24-cv-03766-SVK (N.D. Cal. May 12, 2025) · No. 24-cv-03766-SVK · Decided May 12, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Northern District of California reviews a Social Security disability benefits denial. The court holds that the Administrative Law Judge adequately evaluated the claimant’s mental impairments, residual functional capacity, medical opinions, and the administrative record. The court affirms the Commissioner’s decision.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Susan Van Keulen
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Northern District of California
DECIDED	May 12, 2025
DOCKET	24-cv-03766-SVK
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner's final decision denying her application for disability benefits. The parties consented to magistrate-judge jurisdiction and submitted the case for decision on the briefs.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews the Commissioner's decision under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) and will disturb it only if it is unsupported by substantial evidence or based on improper legal standards. The court must uphold an ALJ's findings when the evidence is susceptible to more than one rational interpretation and the findings are supported by reasonable inferences from the record. Legal error is harmless when it does not affect the outcome, although the reviewing court may not make independent findings to deem an error harmless and is constrained to the reasons asserted by the ALJ.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court order; nonprecedential

PARTIES

M.M. v. Martin O'Malley, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

agency adjudication

administrative law

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability benefits

administrative law

federal court judicial review

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ properly determined that Plaintiff's mental impairments did not meet or medically equal a listed impairment.
2. Whether substantial evidence supported the ALJ's residual functional capacity determination.
3. Whether the ALJ failed to fully and fairly develop the administrative record.

HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ did not err in finding that Plaintiff's mental impairments, considered singly and in combination, did not meet or medically equal Listings 12.02, 12.06, or 12.15. The ALJ reasonably discounted the consultative opinion finding a marked limitation in concentration, persistence, or pace, and any error concerning that single marked limitation would have been harmless because the paragraph B criteria require two marked limitations or one extreme limitation.
2. The ALJ did not err in finding that Plaintiff could perform light work with additional limitations.
3. The ALJ did not violate the duty to develop the record because the evidence was not ambiguous and the record was adequate for evaluation of Plaintiff's claim.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"For the foregoing reasons, the Commissioner's decision is AFFIRMED."

"The RFC need not exactly match the opinion findings of any particular medical source."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged disability based on physical and mental impairments, including lumbar degenerative disc disease, iron deficiency anemia, neurocognitive or depressive disorder, anxiety, and PTSD. The ALJ found mild to moderate limitations in the four areas of mental functioning, determined that Plaintiff did not meet or equal a listed impairment, and assessed a residual functional capacity for light work with additional limitations. Although medical opinions differed regarding Plaintiff's ability to sit, stand, and walk, the ALJ relied on the overall medical record and daily activities in finding that Plaintiff could perform jobs existing in significant numbers in the national economy.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff applied for Supplemental Security Income, alleging disability beginning April 4, 2020. The claim was denied initially and on reconsideration; following a telephonic hearing, the ALJ denied the claim on December 13, 2023. The Appeals Council denied review, and Plaintiff filed this action. The district court affirmed the Commissioner's decision.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Brown-Hunter v. Colvin, 806 F.3d 487, 492 (9th Cir. 2015)
- Biestek v. Berryhill, 587 U.S. 97, 102-103 (2019)
- Rounds v. Comm'r of Soc. Sec. Admin., 807 F.3d 996, 1002 (9th Cir. 2015)
- Ghanim v. Colvin, 763 F.3d 1154, 1160 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Kennedy v. Colvin, 738 F.3d 1172, 1175 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Ogin v. Astrue, No. C 11-5077 MEJ, 2012 WL 3877679, at *8 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 6, 2012), rev'd on other grounds sub nom. Ogin v. Colvin, 608 F. App'x 519 (9th Cir. 2015)
- Bowen v. Yuckert, 482 U.S. 137, 141 (1987)
- Hoopai v. Astrue, 499 F.3d 1071, 1077-78 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Robinson v. Berryhill, No. 16-cv-02537-JCS, 2018 WL 1366638, at *14 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 16, 2018)
- Gonzalez v. Sullivan, 914 F.2d 1197, 1201 (9th Cir. 1990)
- Kenneth C. v. Saul, No. 19-cv-06627-JST, 2021 WL 4927413, at *15 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 15, 2021)
- Woods v. Kijakazi, 32 F.4th 785, 787, 791-793 (9th Cir. 2022)
- Azia B., 2023 WL 1442841, at *8
- Mills v. Comm'r of Soc. Sec., No. 2:13-cv-0899-KJN, 2014 WL 4195012, at *4 n.8 (E.D. Cal. Aug. 22, 2014)
- De Fletes v. Colvin, No. C12-00661 HRL, 2013 WL 1345724, at *2 (N.D. Cal. Mar. 31, 2013)
- Sam v. Astrue, 550 F.3d 808, 810 (9th Cir. 2008)
- Mayes v. Massanari, 276 F.3d 453, 459-60 (9th Cir. 2001)
- Tonapetyan v. Halter, 242 F.3d 1144, 1150 (9th Cir. 2001)
- McLeod v. Astrue, 640 F.3d 881, 885 (9th Cir. 2011)
- Higbee v. Sullivan, 975 F.2d 558, 562 (9th Cir. 1992)
- Lizarraga v. Berryhill, No. 16-cv-6561-BLF, 2018 WL 827895, at *7 (N.D. Cal. Feb. 12, 2018)