

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF UTAH,  
CENTRAL DIVISION

Sheila S. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of the Social Security  
Administration

Sheila S. · No. 2:25-cv-00260 · Decided March 23, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Utah affirmed the Commissioner of Social Security’s denial of Sheila S.’s applications for disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income. The court held that the ALJ adequately considered psychological testing, properly assessed the claimant’s residual functional capacity, and relied on vocational-expert testimony that addressed the limitations included in the RFC. The court also rejected the claimant’s due-process and Dictionary of Occupational Titles arguments.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | United States District Court for the District of Utah, Central Division                                                                                                                                                            |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Daphne A. Oberg                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| JURISDICTION          | United States District Court for the District of Utah, Central Division                                                                                                                                                            |
| DECIDED               | March 23, 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| DOCKET                | 2:25-cv-00260                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| DISPOSITION           | affirmed                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | Action for judicial review under 42 U.S.C. §§ 405(g) and 1383(c)(3) of the Commissioner’s denial of applications for disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income.                                               |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW    | The court reviews whether substantial evidence supports the ALJ’s factual findings and whether the ALJ applied the correct legal standards. The court may not reweigh the evidence or substitute its judgment for that of the ALJ. |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | unpublished                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| PARTIES               | Sheila S. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of the Social Security Administration                                                                                                                                                   |

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

disability definition

## PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

judicial review of agency action

vocational-expert evidence

procedural due process

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ erred by failing to evaluate the persuasiveness of psychological testing and related evidence from the consultative examiner.
2. Whether the ALJ relied on vocational-expert testimony responding to an incomplete hypothetical.
3. Whether limiting counsel's questioning of the vocational expert violated the claimant's due process rights.
4. Whether the vocational-expert testimony conflicted with the Dictionary of Occupational Titles or the assessed RFC.

## HOLDINGS

1. The ALJ was not required to evaluate the persuasiveness of the psychological testing because the testing results, clinical findings, and diagnoses were not medical opinions under the agency's regulatory definition. The ALJ adequately considered the evidence in determining the claimant's RFC.
2. The vocational expert's testimony constituted substantial evidence because the hypothetical included all limitations ultimately included in the ALJ's RFC assessment. The ALJ properly omitted the claimant's raw medical test results from the hypothetical.
3. The ALJ did not violate due process by limiting counsel from asking the vocational expert to interpret the claimant's medical test results. The restrictions were appropriate because the expert could be questioned about vocational matters but not medical matters, and the claimant failed to show prejudice or fundamental unfairness.
4. The claimant demonstrated no conflict between the vocational expert's testimony and the Dictionary of Occupational Titles. She identified no inconsistency between the assessed ability to perform simple, routine, repetitive tasks and the identified jobs' SVP level of 2, and the vocational expert confirmed consistency with the DOT.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*"This court reviews the ALJ's decision to determine whether substantial evidence supports his factual findings and whether he applied the correct legal standards."* (at 3)

*"And the court may not reweigh the evidence nor substitute its judgment for that of the ALJ."* (at 3)

*"Because Dr. Paney did not provide medical opinion evidence, the ALJ was not required to evaluate the persuasiveness of her report."* (at 10)

*“If the hypothetical question to the vocational expert includes all limitations the ALJ ultimately included in the RFC, the expert’s testimony is a proper basis for step-five findings.” (at 12)*

*“The restrictions the ALJ imposed on the cross-examination of the expert did not violate Ms. S.’s due process.” (at 15)*

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The ALJ found that Sheila S. had severe mental impairments, including PTSD, bipolar disorder, depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, paranoid personality disorder, and dissociative personality disorder. The ALJ assessed a residual functional capacity for medium work with limitations to moderate or quiet noise, simple instructions involving routine and repetitive tasks, occasional changes in routine, and occasional contact with others. A psychological consultative examiner administered memory and cognitive testing, but noted variable effort and that the results might underestimate Sheila S.’s abilities. Relying on the RFC and vocational-expert testimony, the ALJ found that she could perform three jobs in the national economy.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Sheila S. applied for disability insurance benefits and supplemental security income. After a hearing, the ALJ found her not disabled at step five of the sequential evaluation because she could perform other work in the national economy. The Appeals Council denied review, making the ALJ’s decision final. The district court affirmed the Commissioner’s decision.

## DISPOSITION

affirmed

## CASES CITED

- Lax v. Astrue, 489 F.3d 1080, 1084 (10th Cir. 2007)
- Jensen v. Barnhart, 436 F.3d 1163, 1165 (10th Cir. 2005)
- Biestek v. Berryhill, 587 U.S. 97, 102-03 (2019)
- Langley v. Barnhart, 373 F.3d 1116, 1118 (10th Cir. 2004)
- Bowen v. Yuckert, 482 U.S. 137, 140-42 (1987)
- Williams v. Bowen, 844 F.2d 748, 750-51 (10th Cir. 1988)
- Ray v. Bowen, 865 F.2d 222, 224 (10th Cir. 1989)
- Clifton v. Chater, 79 F.3d 1007, 1009-10 (10th Cir. 1996)
- Hargis v. Sullivan, 945 F.2d 1482, 1492 (10th Cir. 1991)
- Rutledge v. Apfel, 230 F.3d 1172, 1175 (10th Cir. 2000)
- Qualls v. Apfel, 206 F.3d 1368, 1373 (10th Cir. 2000)
- Allison v. Heckler, 711 F.2d 145, 147 (10th Cir. 1983)
- Richardson v. Perales, 402 U.S. 389, 400 (1971)
- Galdean v. Barnhart, 46 F. App’x 920, 923 (10th Cir. 2002)

- Mays v. Colvin, 739 F.3d 569, 573-74 (10th Cir. 2014)

---

Retrieved from lawtools.ai · <https://lawtools.ai/cases/federal/united-states-district-court-for-the-district-of-utah-centra/2026/sheila-s-v-frank-bisignano-commissioner-of-the-social-ekzeub0s>