

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF KANSAS

Karla S. M. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

Karla S. M. · No. No. 24-2479-JWL · Decided November 21, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Kansas reviewed the denial of Karla S. M.’s claim for Social Security Disability Insurance benefits for the period before January 4, 2020. The court remanded the Commissioner’s decision under the fourth sentence of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g), concluding that further proceedings were warranted concerning the ALJ’s assessment of the claimant’s residual functional capacity and ability to interact with supervisors.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
WRITING FOR THE COURT	John W. Lungstrum
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Kansas
DECIDED	November 21, 2025
DOCKET	No. 24-2479-JWL
DISPOSITION	remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff sought judicial review under 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) of the Commissioner's decision denying her SSDI benefits for the period before January 4, 2020.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed whether the ALJ applied the correct legal standards and whether the factual findings were supported by substantial evidence. The court could not reweigh the evidence or substitute its judgment for the Commissioner's, and factual findings could be overturned only when the evidence compelled a contrary conclusion.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Karla S. M. v. Frank Bisignano, Commissioner of Social Security

TOPICS

judicial review of agency action

administrative law

administrative procedure act

remedies

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

Social Security disability

administrative law

federal civil procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the ALJ adequately assessed Plaintiff's residual functional capacity on a function-by-function basis before assigning a light-work exertional category.
2. Whether the ALJ adequately addressed Plaintiff's ability to interact with supervisors after finding moderate limitations in interacting with others and evaluating a consultative psychologist's opinion.
3. Whether the case should be remanded for further administrative proceedings or for an immediate award of benefits.

HOLDINGS

1. The court remanded because the record and decision did not adequately establish the functional findings underlying the ALJ's light-work RFC determination, and resolving the issue would require the Commissioner rather than the court to perform the necessary disability analysis.
2. The court remanded because the ALJ addressed interaction with coworkers and the public but did not address Plaintiff's ability to interact with, accept instruction from, or respond to criticism from supervisors, leaving the court unable to resolve the disability determination without drawing an impermissible additional inference.
3. The case should be remanded for further proceedings, not for an immediate calculation and award of benefits.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"The SSR requires the abilities be assessed on a function-by-function basis before being expressed in terms of an exertional level."

"It is the Commissioner's, not the court's, duty to decide the issue of disability."

"However, the Commissioner is not entitled to adjudicate a case ad infinitum until he correctly applies the proper legal standard and gathers evidence to support his conclusion."

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff protectively filed for SSDI benefits on November 15, 2018. The ALJ found Plaintiff disabled beginning January 4, 2020, when she attained age 55, but denied disability for the earlier period. The ALJ assigned a light-work residual functional capacity without expressly stating Plaintiff's capacity for sitting, standing, and walking during an eight-hour workday, and limited interaction with coworkers and the public without addressing interaction with supervisors.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed an SSDI application in 2018. An ALJ issued a partially favorable decision finding Plaintiff disabled beginning January 4, 2020, but not before that date. After two prior appeals concerning the period

before January 4, 2020, the court reviewed the Commissioner's subsequent decision and remanded under the fourth sentence of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) for further proceedings rather than ordering an immediate award of benefits.

DISPOSITION

remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

Enter judgment under the fourth sentence of 42 U.S.C. § 405(g) remanding the Commissioner's final decision for further proceedings consistent with the opinion, including proper consideration of the RFC and Plaintiff's ability to interact with supervisors.

CASES CITED

- Wall v. Astrue, 561 F.3d 1048, 1052 (10th Cir. 2009)
- Lax v. Astrue, 489 F.3d 1080, 1084 (10th Cir. 2007)
- White v. Barnhart, 287 F.3d 903, 905 (10th Cir. 2001)
- Richardson v. Perales, 402 U.S. 389, 401 (1971)
- Gossett v. Bowen, 862 F.2d 802, 804-05 (10th Cir. 1988)
- I.N.S. v. Elias-Zacarias, 502 U.S. 478, 481 n.1 (1992)
- Bowman v. Astrue, 511 F.3d 1270, 1272 (10th Cir. 2008)
- Casias v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 933 F.2d 799, 800 (10th Cir. 1991)
- Hackett v. Barnhart, 395 F.3d 1168, 1172 (10th Cir. 2005)
- Bowling v. Shalala, 36 F.3d 431, 434 (5th Cir. 1994)
- Harrell v. Bowen, 862 F.2d 471, 475 (5th Cir. 1988)
- Wilson v. Astrue, 602 F.3d 1136, 1139 (10th Cir. 2010)
- Williams v. Bowen, 844 F.2d 748, 750-51 (10th Cir. 1988)
- Blea v. Barnhart, 466 F.3d 903, 907 (10th Cir. 2006)
- Dikeman v. Halter, 245 F.3d 1182, 1184 (10th Cir. 2001)
- Haddock v. Apfel, 196 F.3d 1084, 1088 (10th Cir. 1999)
- Elvia C. v. Bisignano, Civ. A. No. 24-1204-JWL, 2025 WL 2645252, at *4 (D. Kan. Sept. 15, 2025)
- Luna v. Colvin, Civ. A. No. 13-1289-JWL, 2014 WL 5598248, at *5 (D. Kan. Nov. 4, 2014)
- Ragland v. Shalala, 992 F.2d 1056, 1060 (10th Cir. 1993)
- Taylor v. Callahan, 969 F. Supp. 664, 673 (D. Kan. 1997)
- Dixon v. Heckler, 811 F.2d 506, 511 (10th Cir. 1987)
- Salazar v. Barnhart, 468 F.3d 615, 626 (10th Cir. 2006)
- Harris v. Secretary of Health & Human Services, 821 F.2d 541, 545 (10th Cir. 1987)
- Sisco v. Department of Health & Human Services, 10 F.3d 739, 746 (10th Cir. 1993)

- Gilliland v. Heckler, 786 F.2d 178, 184-85 (3d Cir. 1986)
- Karla M. v. Kijakazi, Case No. 2:21-cv-02528-EFM (D. Kan. Sept. 30, 2022)
- Karla M. v. O'Malley, Case No. 2:23-02380-JWL (D. Kan. Jan. 16, 2024)

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