

**STATE OF MICHIGAN  
STATE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS AND RULES  
FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH**

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IN THE MATTER OF:

Docket No. 2011-12223 QHP  
Case No. 42756620

██████████  
Appellant  
\_\_\_\_\_ /

**DECISION AND ORDER**

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and 42 CFR 431.200 *et seq.*, upon the Appellant's request for a hearing.

After due notice, a hearing held on ██████████. The Appellant was represented by ██████████.

██████████ was represented by ██████████, and ██████████. ██████████, appeared as witnesses for ██████████. ██████████ is a Department of Community Health contracted Medicaid Health Plan (hereinafter MHP).

**ISSUE**

Did the Medicaid Health Plan properly deny the Appellant's request for speech therapy?

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

The Administrative Law Judge, based upon the competent, material and substantial evidence on the whole record, finds as material fact:

1. The Appellant is ██████████ Medicaid beneficiary.
2. On ██████████, the MHP received a request for coverage for speech therapy for the Appellant. (Exhibit 1, pages 8-13)
3. A speech language pathology dysphagia evaluation was included with the request. The evaluation indicated that the Appellant is performing severely below limits for age appropriate mastication and deglutition. (Exhibit 1, pages 9-12)
4. On ██████████, the MHP sent the Appellant notice that the request for speech therapy coverage was denied. The notice explained

that the information submitted did not support the criteria that the Appellant's condition is temporary in nature, but instead is due to a developmental delay/disability. The notice also stated that speech therapy services related to treatment of a developmental delay are not covered by the benefit plan, however these services are available through the Intermediate School District. (Exhibit 1, page 15)

5. On ██████████, the Department received the Appellant's Request for Hearing. (Exhibit 1, page 7)

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The Medical Assistance Program is established pursuant to Title XIX of the Social Security Act and is implemented by Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). It is administered in accordance with state statute, the Social Welfare Act, the Administrative Code, and the State Plan under Title XIX of the Social Security Act Medical Assistance Program.

On May 30, 1997, the Department received approval from the Health Care Financing Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, allowing Michigan to restrict Medicaid beneficiaries' choice to obtain medical services only from specified Medicaid Health Plans.

The Respondent is one of those Medicaid Health Plans.

The covered services that the Contractor has available for enrollees must include, at a minimum, the covered services listed below (List omitted by Administrative Law Judge). The Contractor may limit services to those which are medically necessary and appropriate, and which conform to professionally accepted standards of care. Contractors must operate consistent with all applicable Medicaid provider manuals and publications for coverages and limitations. If new services are added to the Michigan Medicaid Program, or if services are expanded, eliminated, or otherwise changed, the Contractor must implement the changes consistent with State direction in accordance with the provisions of Contract Section 1-Z.

*Article II-G, Scope of Comprehensive Benefit Package.  
MDCH contract (Contract) with the Medicaid Health Plans,  
September 30, 2004.*

The major components of the Contractor's utilization management plan must encompass, at a minimum, the following:

- Written policies with review decision criteria and procedures that conform to managed health care industry standards and processes.
- A formal utilization review committee directed by the Contractor's medical director to oversee the utilization review process.
- Sufficient resources to regularly review the effectiveness of the utilization review process and to make changes to the process as needed.
- An annual review and reporting of utilization review activities and outcomes/interventions from the review.

The Contractor must establish and use a written prior approval policy and procedure for utilization management purposes. The Contractor may not use such policies and procedures to avoid providing medically necessary services within the coverages established under the Contract. The policy must ensure that the review criteria for authorization decisions are applied consistently and require that the reviewer consult with the requesting provider when appropriate. The policy must also require that utilization management decisions be made by a health care professional who has appropriate clinical expertise regarding the service under review.

*Article II-P, Utilization Management, Contract,  
September 30, 2004.*

As stated in the Department-MHP contract language above, a MHP, "must operate consistent with all applicable Medicaid Provider Manuals and publications for coverages and limitations." The pertinent sections of the Michigan Medicaid Provider Manual (MPM) are as follows:

### **5.3 SPEECH THERAPY**

The terms speech therapy, speech-language pathology, speech-language therapy, and therapy are used to mean speech and language rehabilitation services and speech-language therapy.

MDCH covers speech-language therapy provided in the outpatient setting. MDCH only reimburses services for speech-language therapy when provided by:

- A speech-language pathologist (SLP) with a current Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC).
- An appropriately supervised SLP candidate (i.e., in their clinical fellowship year [CFY]) or having completed all requirements but has not obtained a CCC. All

documentation must be reviewed and signed by the appropriately credentialed supervising SLP.

- A student completing his clinical affiliation under direct supervision of (i.e., in the presence of) an SLP having a current CCC. All documentation must be reviewed and signed by the appropriately credentialed supervising SLP.

MDCH expects that all SLPs will utilize the most ethically appropriate therapy within their scope of practice as defined by Michigan law and/or the appropriate national professional association.

**For all beneficiaries of all ages**, speech therapy must relate to a medical diagnosis, and is limited to services for:

- Articulation
- Language
- Rhythm
- Swallowing
- Training in the use of an speech-generating device
- Training in the use of an oral-pharyngeal prosthesis
- Voice

**For CSHCS beneficiaries** (i.e., those not enrolled in Medicaid; only enrolled with CSHCS), therapy must be directly related to the CSHCS-eligible diagnosis(es) and prescribed by the specialty physician who is overseeing the care of the beneficiary.

Therapy must be reasonable, medically necessary and expected to result in an improvement and/or elimination of the stated problem within a reasonable amount of time (i.e., when treatment is due to a recent change in medical or functional status affecting speech, and the beneficiary would experience a reduction in medical or functional status without therapy).

Speech therapy services must be skilled (i.e., require the skills, knowledge and education of a certified SLP to assess the beneficiary for deficits, develop a treatment program and provide therapy).

Interventions that could be provided by another practitioner (e.g., teacher, registered nurse [RN], licensed physical therapist [LPT], registered occupational therapist [OTR],

family member, or caregiver) would not be reimbursed as speech therapy by MDCH.

For beneficiaries of all ages, therapy is **not** covered:

- When provided by an independent SLP.
- For educational, vocational, social/emotional, or recreational purposes.
- If services are required to be provided by another public agency (e.g., PIHP/CMHSP provider, SBS).
- When intended to improve communication skills beyond premorbid levels (e.g., beyond the functional communication status prior to the onset of a new diagnosis or change in medical status).
- If it requires PA but is rendered before PA is approved.
- If it is habilitative. Habilitative treatment includes teaching someone communication skills for the first time without compensatory techniques or processes. This may include syntax or semantics (which are developmental) or articulation errors that are within the normal developmental process.
- If it is designed to facilitate the normal progression of development without compensatory techniques or processes.
- If continuation is maintenance in nature.
- If provided to meet developmental milestones.
- If Medicare does not consider the service medically necessary.

### **5.3.A. DUPLICATION OF SERVICES**

Some areas (e.g., dysphagia, assistive technology) may appropriately be addressed by more than one discipline (e.g., OT, PT, speech therapy) in more than one setting. MDCH does not cover duplication of services, i.e., where two disciplines are working on similar areas/goals. It is the treating therapist's responsibility to communicate with other practitioners, coordinate services, and document this in his reports.

### **5.3.B. SERVICES TO SCHOOL-AGED BENEFICIARIES**

School-aged beneficiaries may be eligible to receive speech-language therapy through multiple sources. Educational speech is expected to be provided by the school system and is not covered by MDCH or CSHCS. Examples of educational speech include enhancing vocabulary, improving sentence structure, improving reading, increasing attention span, and identifying colors and numbers. Only medically necessary

therapy may be provided in the outpatient setting. Coordination between all speech therapy providers should be continuous to ensure a smooth transition between sources.

Outpatient therapy provided to school-aged children during the summer months in order to maintain the therapy services provided in the school are considered a continuation of therapy services when there is no change in beneficiary diagnosis or function. Prior authorization is required before initiating a continuation of therapy.

Version Outpatient Therapy  
Date: October 1, 2009 Pages 19-20

The ██████████ testified that the Appellant's request was reviewed by a pediatrician with the MHP and denied because medical documentation indicated a developmental delay. She explained that the MHP does not cover speech therapy coverage for developmental delays as this would duplicate services offered through the Intermediate School District ██████████. The ██████████ indicated that in the course of the member appeal, the request was reviewed by another pediatrician. This pediatrician considered that the Appellant is sustaining weight. It appears that the Appellant has an oral aversion more so than trouble swallowing. The ██████████ clarified that this does not mean that speech therapy is not required, only that it is not covered by the MHP.

The Appellant's ██████████ disagrees with the denial and testified that she called ██████████, but they said that the Appellant was unlikely to be approved because the condition was not severe enough. The Appellant's ██████████ noted that occupational therapy has been denied as well. She stated that ██████████ indicated they did not have a category to put the Appellant in. Since ██████████ indicated they were not likely to approve services for the Appellant during the telephone conversation, the Appellant's ██████████ has not taken the Appellant in to ██████████ for an evaluation there. The Appellant's ██████████ explained that the Appellant also likes this speech therapist, which is rare. Therefore, she pursued this appeal, rather than having an ██████████ evaluation and possibly having to appeal a denial of services from that program.

While this ALJ sympathizes with the Appellant's circumstances, Medicaid policy clearly states that speech therapy that is educational, habilitative, developmental, or required to be provided by another public agency is not covered. The documentation submitted indicated the speech therapy was requested because the Appellant was performing severely below limits for age appropriate mastication and deglutition. (Exhibit 1, page 11) Speech therapy services for developmental delay are available through the intermediate school district. The MHP's denial, based upon the documentation submitted, was consistent with the Department's Medicaid policy.

[REDACTED]  
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Decision and Order

**DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that that the Medicaid Health Plan properly denied the Appellant's request for speech therapy.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED** that:

The Medicaid Health Plan's decision is AFFIRMED.

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Colleen Lack  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Olga Dazzo, Director  
Michigan Department of Community Health

cc:

[REDACTED]

Date Mailed: 3/1/2011

**\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\***

The State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules may order a rehearing on either its own motion or at the request of a party within 30 days of the mailing date of this Decision and Order. The State Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules will not order a rehearing on the Department's motion where the final decision or rehearing cannot be implemented within 90 days of the filing of the original request. The Appellant may appeal the Decision and Order to Circuit Court within 30 days of the receipt of the Decision and Order or, if a timely request for rehearing was made, within 30 days of the receipt of the rehearing decision.