

**STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM  
FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH**

P.O. Box 30763, Lansing, MI 48909  
(877) 833-0870; Fax: (517) 373-4147

IN THE MATTER OF:

██████████

Appellant

Docket No. 2013-40044 QHP

██████████

**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 was held on ██████████. The Appellant was represented by ██████████ mother. ██████████ Grievance Coordinator, represented ██████████ ██████████, the Medicaid Health Plan ("MHP"). ██████████ RN Clinical and Quality Review Specialist, appeared as a witness for the MHP.

**ISSUE**

Did the MHP properly deny the Appellant's request for speech therapy services?

**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 a ██████-year-old Medicaid beneficiary.
2. On or about ██████████, the MHP received a request for coverage for speech therapy services for the Appellant. The Appellant's diagnosis was listed as language disorder. (Exhibit A)
3. On ██████████, the MHP sent the Appellant a letter stating the request for outpatient speech therapy services was denied because speech therapy must be related to a medical diagnosis and is limited to specified services. The notice further stated that the notes do not say the Appellant has a medical diagnosis. (Exhibit B)
4. On ██████████, the Michigan Administrative Hearing System received the Request for Hearing submitted on the Appellant's behalf. Included was a prescription providing additional diagnoses of speech delay, developmental delay, and macrocephaly. (Exhibit C)

5. The MHP completed an internal review for this denial, including a grievance hearing and review of the additional documentation submitted with the request for hearing. (Exhibits D and E)
6. On ██████████, the MHP issued a letter to the Appellant indicating the determination to deny speech therapy coverage was upheld by the Grievance Committee because it is considered habilitative and therefore is specifically excluded. (Exhibit F)

### **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.

The Respondent is one of those MHPs.

The covered services that the Contractor has available for enrollees must include, at a minimum, the covered services listed below. The Contractor may limit services to those which are medically necessary and appropriate, and which conform to professionally accepted standards of care. The Contractor 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 2.024.

Although the Contractor must provide the full range of covered services listed below they may choose to provide services over and above those specified. The covered services provided to enrollees under this Contract include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ambulance and other emergency medical transportation
- Blood lead testing in accordance with Medicaid Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) policy
- Certified nurse midwife services

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- Certified pediatric and family nurse practitioner services
- Chiropractic services
- Diagnostic lab, x-ray and other imaging services
- Durable medical equipment (DME) and supplies
- Emergency services
- End Stage Renal Disease services
- Family planning services (e.g., examination, sterilization procedures, limited infertility screening, and diagnosis)
- Health education
- Hearing and speech services
- Hearing aids
- Home Health services
- Hospice services (if requested by the enrollee)
- Immunizations
- Inpatient and outpatient hospital services
- Intermittent or short-term restorative or rehabilitative services (in a nursing facility), up to 45 days
- Restorative or rehabilitative services (in a place of service other than a nursing facility)
- Medically necessary weight reduction services
- Mental health care – maximum of 20 outpatient visits per calendar year
- Out-of-state services authorized by the Contractor
- Outreach for included services, especially pregnancy-related and Well child care
- Parenting and birthing classes
- Pharmacy services
- Podiatry services
- Practitioners' services (such as those provided by physicians, optometrists and dentists enrolled as a Medicaid Provider Type 10)
- Prosthetics and orthotics
- Tobacco cessation treatment including pharmaceutical and behavioral support
- Therapies (speech, language, physical, occupational) excluding services provided to persons with development disabilities which are billed through Community Mental Health Services Program (CMHSP) providers or Intermediate School Districts.
- Transplant services
- Transportation for medically necessary covered services

- Treatment for sexually transmitted disease (STD)
- Vision services
- Well child/EPSTD for persons under age 21

Article 1.020 Scope of [Services],  
at §1.022 E (1) contract, 2010, p. 22.

- (1) The major components of the Contractor's utilization management (UM) program 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 UM activities of the Contractor must be integrated with the Contractor's QAPI program.
- (2) Prior Approval Policy and Procedure

The Contractor must establish and use a written prior approval policy and procedure for UM 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 UM decisions be made by a health care professional who has appropriate clinical expertise regarding the service under review.

....

Contract, *Supra*, p. 49

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 section of the Michigan Medicaid Provider Manual (MPM) states:

### 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.

If a school-aged beneficiary receives medically necessary therapy services in both a school setting (as part of an Individualized Education Plan [IEP]) and in an outpatient setting, coordination of therapy between the providers is required. Providers are to maintain documentation of coordination in the beneficiary's file.

*Department of Community Health,  
Medicaid Provider Manual, Outpatient Therapy Section  
Version Date: January 1, 2013, Pages 18-20.*

The MHP explained that the requested speech therapy services were denied initially because there was no documentation that the requested services were related to a medical condition in the information submitted with the prior authorization request. (Grievance Coordinator Testimony; RN Clinical and Quality Review Specialist Testimony; Exhibit B)

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With the hearing request, the Appellant submitted a prescription listing additional diagnoses of speech delay, developmental delay, and macrocephaly. (Exhibit C) The MHP completed an internal review for this denial, including a grievance hearing and review of the additional documentation submitted with the request for hearing. (Exhibits D and E) On ██████████, the MHP issued a letter to the Appellant indicating the determination to deny speech therapy coverage was upheld by the Grievance Committee because it is considered habilitative and therefore is specifically excluded. The RN Clinical and Quality Review Specialist testified it appeared that the two handwritten diagnoses, macrocephaly and developmental delay, were added as an afterthought. In the original typed portions of the prescription, near the top, it states “diagnose and treat dx: speech delay.” The MHP asserted that there was still no documentation the requested speech therapy was related to an illness or injury and would be considered habilitative, related to the normal progression of development, and/or to meet developmental milestones. (Grievance Coordinator Testimony; RN Clinical and Quality Review Specialist Testimony; Exhibit C, page 3; Exhibit F)

The Appellant’s mother disagrees with the denial and testified the Appellant is not developing in speech properly. The Appellant has a very limited vocabulary, cannot name common objects in pictures and everything she does and says she has heard someone else say. The Appellant does not use her words properly. The Appellant’s mother understands that the Appellant can get help through the school district but there is only so much they can do. The Appellant also needs physical and occupational therapy, but a lot has to do with her speech. The Appellant would highly benefit from once per week speech therapy. (Mother Testimony)

While this ALJ sympathizes with the Appellant’s circumstances, the above cited Medicaid policy states that speech therapy is not covered in several circumstances, including: if services are required to be provided by another public agency; when intended to improve communication skills beyond premorbid levels; for educational, vocational, social/emotional, or recreational purposes; if it is habilitative; designed to facilitate the normal progression of development without compensatory techniques or processes; or to meet developmental milestones. The evidence indicates the requested speech therapy for the Appellant would be related to developmental delay and habilitative. The MHP’s denial of this prior authorization request for speech therapy services was consistent with the Medicaid policy and must be upheld.

**DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that that the MHP properly denied the Appellant’s request for speech therapy services based on the available information.



