

**STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING SYSTEM  
FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

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**IN THE MATTER OF:**

Docket No. 15-002263 EDW

██████████

Appellant

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**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 ██████████ ██████████. Appellant's husband appeared and testified on the Appellant's behalf.

██████████, Community Services Director, appeared and testified on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services' (Department) Waiver Agency, the ██████████.

**ISSUE**

Did the Department's MI Choice Waiver Agency properly determine that it could not immediately assess the Appellant for the MI Choice Waiver program and then placed her on a waiting list chronologically by date of request of 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, (DOB: ██████████), who requested enrollment in the MI Choice Waiver Program. (Testimony).
2. The Department contracts with the Waiver Agency to provide MI Choice Waiver services to eligible beneficiaries. (Testimony).
3. On ██████████, Appellant's husband contacted the Waiver Agency to request MI Choice Waiver services for the Appellant. ██████████ ██████████, LBSW, an Eligibility Specialist/Options Counselor in Intake, conducted a screening with the Appellant's husband

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using the MI Choice Intake Guidelines and determined that the Appellant passed the MI Choice Intake Guidelines, i.e., was likely eligible for the MI Choice Waiver program. (Exhibit A and testimony).

4. Appellant did not meet one of the priority categories or exceptions to the wait list, so she was placed on the wait list, and on [REDACTED] the [REDACTED] notified the Appellant in writing that the MI Choice Waiver program was currently at capacity and the Appellant could not be evaluated for enrollment at that time and that she was placed on the MI Choice Wait list. (Exhibit A and testimony).
5. On [REDACTED], MAHS received the Appellant's request for an Administrative Hearing. (Exhibit 1).

**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.

This Appellant requested services through the Department's Home and Community Based Services for Elderly and Disabled (HCBS/ED). The waiver is called MI Choice in Michigan. The program is funded through the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS, formerly HCFA) to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (Department). Regional agencies function as the Department's administrative agency.

Waivers are intended to provide the flexibility needed to enable States to try new or different approaches to the efficient and cost-effective delivery of health care services, or to adapt their programs to the special needs of particular areas or groups of recipients. Waivers allow exceptions to State plan requirements and permit a State to implement innovative programs or activities on a time-limited basis, and subject to specific safeguards for the protection of recipients and the program. Detailed rules for waivers are set forth in subpart B of part 431, subpart A of part 440 and subpart G of part 441 of this chapter. [42 CFR 430.25(b)].

The policy regarding enrollment in the MI Choice Waiver program is contained in the *Medicaid Provider Manual, MI Choice Waiver*, January 1, 2015 which provides in part:

**SECTION 1 – GENERAL INFORMATION**

MI Choice is a waiver program operated by the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) to deliver home and community-based

services to elderly persons and persons with physical disabilities who meet the Michigan nursing facility level of care criteria that supports required long-term care (as opposed to rehabilitative or limited term stay) provided in a nursing facility. The waiver is approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service (CMS) under section 1915(c) and section 1915(b) of the Social Security Act. MDCH carries out its waiver obligations through a network of enrolled providers that operate as Prepaid Ambulatory Health Plans (PAHPs). These entities are commonly referred to as waiver agencies. MDCH and its waiver agencies must abide by the terms and conditions set forth in the waiver.

MI Choice services are available to qualified participants throughout the state and all provisions of the program are available to each qualified participant unless otherwise noted in this policy and approved by CMS. (p. 1).

\* \* \*

## **SECTION 2 - ELIGIBILITY**

The MI Choice program is available to persons 18 years of age or older who meet each of three eligibility criteria:

- An applicant must establish his/her financial eligibility for Medicaid services as described in the Financial Eligibility subsection of this chapter.
- The applicant must meet functional eligibility requirements through the online version of the Michigan Medicaid Nursing Facility Level of Care Determination (LOCD).
- It must be established that the applicant requires at least two waiver services, one of which must be Supports Coordination, and that the service needs of the applicant cannot be fully met by existing State Plan or other services.

All criteria must be met in order to establish eligibility for the MI Choice program. MI Choice participants must continue to meet these eligibility requirements on an ongoing basis to remain enrolled in the program. (p. 2).

The *Medicaid Provider Manual, MI Choice Waiver*, January 1, 2015, pp. 5-8, outlines the approved evaluation policy and the MI Choice waiting list policy:

### **3.2 MI CHOICE INTAKE GUIDELINES**

The MI Choice Intake Guidelines is a list of questions designed to screen applicants for eligibility and further assessment. Additional probative questions are permissible when needed to clarify eligibility. The MI Choice Intake Guidelines does not, in itself, establish program eligibility. A properly completed MI Choice Intake Guidelines is mandatory for MI Choice waiver agencies prior to placing applicants on a MI Choice waiting list when the agency is operating at its capacity. Individuals who score as Level C, Level D, Level D1 or Level E are those applicants determined potentially eligible for program enrollment and will be placed on the MI Choice waiting list. The date of the MI Choice Intake Guidelines contact establishes the chronological placement of the applicant on the waiting list. The MI Choice Intake Guidelines may be found on the MDCH website. (Refer to the Directory Appendix for website information.)

When the waiver agency is at capacity, applicants requesting enrollment in MI Choice must either be screened by telephone or in person using the MI Choice Intake Guidelines at the time of their request for proper placement on the waiting list. If a caller is seeking services for another individual, the waiver agency shall either contact the applicant for whom services are being requested or complete the MI Choice Intake Guidelines to the extent possible using information known to the caller. For applicants who are deaf, hearing impaired, or otherwise unable to participate in a telephone interview, it is acceptable to use an interpreter, a third-party in the interview, or assistive technology to facilitate the exchange of information.

As a rule, nursing facility residents who are seeking to transition into MI Choice are not contacted by telephone but rather are interviewed in the nursing facility. For the purposes of establishing a point of reference for the waiting list, the date of the initial nursing facility visit (introductory interview) shall be considered the same as conducting a MI Choice Intake Guidelines, so long as the functional objectives of the MI Choice Intake Guidelines are met. (Refer to the Waiting Lists subsection for additional information.) Specifically, the introductory meeting must establish a reasonable expectation that the applicant will meet the functional and financial eligibility requirements of the MI Choice program within the next 60 days.

Applicants who are expected to be ineligible based on MI Choice Intake Guidelines information may request a face-to-face evaluation using the Michigan Medicaid Nursing Facility Level of Care Determination and financial eligibility criteria. Such evaluations should be conducted as soon as possible, but must be done within 10 business days of the date the MI

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Choice Intake Guidelines was administered. MI Choice waiver agencies must issue an adverse action notice advising applicants of any and all appeal rights when the applicant appears ineligible either through the MI Choice Intake Guidelines or a face-to-face evaluation.

When an applicant appears to be functionally eligible based on the MI Choice Intake Guidelines but is not expected to meet the financial eligibility requirements, the MI Choice waiver agency must place the applicant on the agency's waiting list if it is anticipated that the applicant will become financially eligible within 60 days. Individuals may be placed on the waiting lists of multiple waiver agencies.

The MI Choice Intake Guidelines is the only recognized tool accepted for telephonic screening of MI Choice applicants and is only accessible to MI Choice waiver agencies. It is not intended to be used for any other purpose within the MI Choice program, nor any other Medicaid program. MI Choice waiver agencies must collect MI Choice Intake Guidelines data electronically using software through the department's contracted vendor.

### **3.3 ENROLLMENT CAPACITY**

MI Choice capacity is limited to the number of participants who can be adequately served under the annual legislative appropriation for the program. Enrollment capacity for each individual waiver agency is at the agency's discretion based on available funding and the expected costs of maintaining services to enrolled participants.

Waiver agencies are allocated a specific number of slots each fiscal year based upon legislative appropriation and must manage enrollments within that allocation.

### **3.4 WAITING LISTS**

Whenever the number of participants receiving services through MI Choice exceeds the existing program capacity, any screened applicant must be placed on the waiver agency's waiting list. Waiting lists must be actively maintained and managed by each MI Choice waiver agency. The enrollment process for the MI Choice program is not ever actually or constructively closed. The applicant's place on the waiting list is determined by priority category in the order described below. Within each category, an applicant is placed on the list in chronological order based on the date of their request for services. This is the only approved method of accessing waiver services when the waiver program is at capacity.

### **3.4.A. PRIORITY CATEGORIES**

Applicants will be placed on a waiting list by priority category and then chronologically by date of request of services. Enrollment in MI Choice is assigned on a first-come/first-served basis using the following categories, listed in order of priority given.

Waiver agencies are required to conduct follow-up phone calls to all applicants on their waiting list. The calls are to determine the applicant's status, offer assistance in accessing alternative services, identify applicants who should be removed from the list, and identify applicants who might be in crisis or at imminent risk of admission to a nursing facility. Each applicant on the waiting list is to be contacted at least once every 90 days. Applicants in crisis or at risk require more frequent contacts. Each waiver agency is required to maintain a record of these follow-up contacts.

#### **3.4.A.1. CHILDREN'S SPECIAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES (CSHCS) AGE EXPIRATIONS**

This category includes only those applicants who continue to require Private Duty Nursing services at the time such coverage ends due to age restrictions under CSHCS.

#### **3.4.A.2. NURSING FACILITY TRANSITIONS**

Nursing facility residents who desire to transition to the community and will otherwise meet enrollment requirements for MI Choice qualify for this priority status and are eligible to receive assistance with supports coordination, transition activities, and transition costs. Priority status is not given to applicants whose service and support needs can be fully met by existing State Plan services.

#### **3.4.A.3. ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES (APS) AND DIVERSIONS**

An applicant with an active Adult Protective Services (APS) case is given priority when critical needs can be addressed by MI Choice services. It is not expected that MI Choice waiver agencies solicit APS cases, but priority is given when necessary.

An applicant is eligible for diversion priority if they are living in the community or are being released from an acute care setting and are found to be at imminent risk of nursing facility admission. Imminent risk of placement in a nursing facility is determined using the Imminent Risk Assessment (IRA), an evaluation developed by MDCH. Use of the IRA is essential in providing an objective differentiation between those applicants

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at risk of a nursing facility placement and those at imminent risk of such a placement. Only applicants found to meet the standard of imminent risk are given priority status on the waiting list. Applicants may request that a subsequent IRA be performed upon a change of condition or circumstance.

Supports coordinators must administer the IRA in person. The design of the tool makes telephone contact insufficient to make a valid determination. Waiver agencies must submit a request for diversion status for an applicant to MDCH. A final approval of a diversion request is made by MDCH.

**3.4.A.4. CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER BY SERVICE REQUEST DATE**

This category includes applicants who do not meet any of the above priority categories or for whom prioritizing information is not known. As stated, applicants will be placed on the waiting list in the chronological order that they requested services as documented by the date of MI Choice Intake Guidelines completion or initial nursing facility introductory meeting.

The Waiver Agency provided reliable evidence that on or about [REDACTED], the Appellant's husband contacted the Waiver Agency to request MI Choice Waiver services for the Appellant. [REDACTED], LBSW, Eligibility Specialist/Options Counselor in Intake, conducted a screening with the Appellant using the MI Choice Intake Guidelines and determined that the Appellant passed the MI Choice Intake Guidelines, i.e., was likely eligible for the MI Choice Waiver program. [REDACTED] stated the Appellant's score on the MI Choice Intake Guidelines indicated she was probably medically eligible for the waiver program. [REDACTED] stated the Appellant was placed on the wait list in chronological order based on the date of contact with the Waiver Agency, and on [REDACTED] the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] notified the Appellant in writing that the MI Choice Waiver program was currently at capacity and the Appellant could not be evaluated for enrollment at that time and that she was placed on the MI Choice Wait list.

Appellant's husband testified he sent in the paper requesting a hearing. He said he listed all the doctors who are taking care of the Appellant to keep her healthy. Appellant's husband said his wife has a falling problem and uses a walker to get around. He said there needs to be someone around to help keep her from falling. Appellant's husband says [REDACTED] are currently helping out with the Appellant; trying to assist with getting her stronger, but the service will be running out soon.

A review of the *MI Choice Waiver* policies contained in the Medicaid Provider Manual finds that the Valley Area Agency on Aging properly placed the Appellant on the

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MI Choice program waiting list. The information gathered at the time of the telephone screen supports the decision to place Appellant on the waiting list. The *MI Choice Waiver* policy specifically provides that applicants will be placed on a waiting list by priority category and then chronologically by date of request of services.

The MI Choice agencies and this Administrative Law Judge are bound by the MI Choice program policy. In addition, this Administrative Law Judge possesses no equitable jurisdiction to grant exceptions to Medicaid, Department and MI Choice program policy.

The MI Choice Waiver Agency provided sufficient evidence that it implemented the MI Choice waiting list procedure in the manner in which CMS has approved and in accordance to Department policy. Appellant was placed on a waiting list chronologically by date of request of services with the [REDACTED]

**DECISION AND ORDER**

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, decides that the MI Choice Waiver Agency properly denied immediate assessment of the Appellant and placed the Appellant on the waiting list chronologically by date of request of services.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED** that:

The Department's decision is **AFFIRMED**.

*William D Bond*

William D. Bond  
Administrative Law Judge  
for Nick Lyon, Director

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Date Signed: [REDACTED]

Date Mailed: [REDACTED]

WDB/db

cc: [REDACTED]