

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED], MI 48823

Date Mailed: November 22, 2021
MOAHR Docket No.: 21-004794
Agency No.: [REDACTED]
Petitioner: [REDACTED]

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE: Steven Kibit

DECISION AND ORDER

This matter is before the undersigned Administrative Law Judge pursuant to MCL 400.9 and upon Petitioner's request for a hearing.

After due notice, a telephone hearing was held on November 17, 2021. [REDACTED], Petitioner's aunt, appeared and testified on Petitioner's behalf. Petitioner also testified as a witness on his own behalf. Allison Pool, Appeals Review Officer, represented the Respondent Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS or Department). Aimee Khalid, LOCD Policy Specialist with the Department; Elizabeth Hartel, social worker/supports coordinator with Tri-County Office on Aging; and Elizabeth Humphrey, registered nurse/supports coordinator with Tri-County Office on Aging; testified as witnesses for Respondent.

During the hearing, Respondent submitted an evidence packet that was admitted into the record as Exhibit A, pages 1-57. Petitioner did not submit any exhibits.

ISSUE

Did Respondent properly find Petitioner ineligible for services through the MI Choice Waiver Program?

FINDINGS OF FACT

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

1. Petitioner is a [REDACTED] () year-old man who has applied for services through the MI Choice Waiver Program. (Testimony of Petitioner).
2. On September 17, 2021, Tri-County Office on Aging, one of Respondent's contract agents for the waiver program, conducted a Michigan Medicaid

Nursing Facility Level of Care Determination (LOCD) assessment with Petitioner. (Exhibit A, page 22).

3. In that LOCD, Petitioner was found to be ineligible for Medicaid nursing facility care based upon his failure to qualify via entry through one of the doors of that tool. (Exhibit A, pages 22-29).
4. On October 14, 2021, the Michigan Office Administrative Hearings and Rules (MOAHR) received the request for hearing filed by Petitioner in this matter regarding Respondent's decision. (Exhibit A, page 30).

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. 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.

Petitioner applied for services through the Department's Home and Community Based Services for Elderly and Disabled. The waiver is called MI Choice in Michigan. The program is funded through the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Regional agencies, in this case Respondent, 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)

A waiver under section 1915(c) of the Social Security Act allows a State to include as "medical assistance" under its plan, home and community-based services furnished to recipients who would otherwise need inpatient care that is furnished in a hospital, SNF (Skilled Nursing Facility), ICF (Intermediate Care Facility), or ICF/MR (Intermediate Care Facility/Mentally Retarded) and is reimbursable under the State Plan. See 42 CFR 430.25(c)(2).

Types of services that may be offered through the waiver program include:

Home or community-based services may include the following services, as they are defined by the agency and approved by CMS:

- (1) Case management services.
- (2) Homemaker services.
- (3) Home health aide services.
- (4) Personal care services.
- (5) Adult day health services
- (6) Habilitation services.
- (7) Respite care services.
- (8) Day treatment or other partial hospitalization services, psychosocial rehabilitation services and clinic services (whether or not furnished in a facility) for individuals with chronic mental illness, subject to the conditions specified in paragraph (d) of this section.
- (9) Other services requested by the agency and approved by CMS as cost effective and necessary to avoid institutionalization.

42 CFR 440.180(b)

The Medicaid Provider Manual (MPM) outlines the governing policy for the MI Choice Waiver program and, with respect to eligibility, the applicable version of the MPM states in part:

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 their financial eligibility for Medicaid services as described in the Financial Eligibility subsection of this chapter.
- Must be categorically eligible for Medicaid as aged or disabled.
- *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.

* * *

2.2 FUNCTIONAL ELIGIBILITY

The MI Choice waiver agency must verify an applicant's functional eligibility for program enrollment using the LOCD application in CHAMPS. Waiver agencies must conduct an LOCD in person with an applicant and submit that information in the LOCD application in CHAMPS, or the agency may adopt the current existing LOCD conducted by another provider. The information submitted is put through an algorithm within the application to determine whether the applicant meets LOCD criteria. Only the LOCD application in CHAMPS can determine functional eligibility for the nursing facility level of care. Additional information can be found in the Nursing Facility Level of Care Determination Chapter and is applicable to MI Choice applicants and participants.

*MPM, July 1, 2021 version
MI Choice Waiver Chapter, page 2
(emphasis added)*

A LOCD is therefore mandated for all Medicaid-reimbursed admissions to the MI Choice Program and, even after enrollment, a beneficiary must continue to meet the outlined criteria in the LOCD on an ongoing basis in order to remain in the program.

With respect to the LOCD, the MPM further provides:

SECTION 1 – GENERAL INFORMATION

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is required to assess all individuals seeking Medicaid-funded long-term services and supports (LTSS) that require level of care eligibility to determine their

functional need for those services. The determination is an essential component of eligibility for services provided in nursing facilities, the MI Choice Waiver Program, the Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), and the MI Health Link Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver Program. Policies contained herein apply equally and consistently to each of these programs except as noted.

MDHHS uses a standard assessment and process for all programs and services that require an individual meet the nursing facility level of care. Programs may not use any other assessment in place of the Level of Care Determination (LOCD) tool for this determination. The LOCD assures a consistent and reliable process for determining that individuals meet the functional eligibility requirements.

Providers may access the LOCD online in the Community Health Automated Medicaid Processing System (CHAMPS) through the MILogin application. (Refer to the Directory Appendix for website information.) LOCD assessment data is entered and processed in CHAMPS.

The LOCD is a “point in time” assessment; that is, it determines the individual’s functional eligibility at the time of the assessment. MDHHS assumes that beneficiaries will maintain functional eligibility until they are determined otherwise through a reassessment or the LOCD’s End Date. A face-to-face LOCD is an in-person meeting between the qualified and licensed health professional and the individual seeking functional eligibility.

* * *

SECTION 4 – NURSING FACILITY LEVEL OF CARE DETERMINATION CRITERIA

The Michigan Nursing Facility Level of Care Determination criteria includes seven domains of need, called Doors. The Doors include: (1) Activities of Daily Living; (2) Cognitive Performance; (3) Physician Involvement; (4) Treatments and Conditions; (5) Skilled Rehabilitation Therapies; (6) Behaviors; and (7) Service Dependency. The Doors and the assessment items are listed below. Guidance on administering the LOCD, including definitions and methods,

is provided in the Michigan Medicaid Nursing Facility Level of Care Determination Field Definition Guidelines.

The LOCD should be an accurate reflection of an individual's current functional status. This information is gathered in a face-to-face meeting by speaking to the individual and those who know the individual well, observing the individual's activities, and reviewing an individual's medical documentation. Refer to the Michigan Medicaid Nursing Facility Level of Care Determination Field Definition Guidelines on the MDHHS website for more information. (Refer to the Directory Appendix for website information.)

4.1 DOOR 1: ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

Door 1 assesses four ADLs: (1) Bed Mobility; (2) Transfers; (3) Toilet Use; and (4) Eating.

4.2 DOOR 2: COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE

Door 2 assesses short-term memory, cognitive skills for daily decision-making and making self-understood.

4.3 DOOR 3: PHYSICIAN INVOLVEMENT

Door 3 assesses the frequency of physician visits and physician order changes.

4.4 DOOR 4: TREATMENTS AND CONDITIONS

Door 4 assesses a set of nine treatments and conditions that may be a predictor of potential frailty or increased health risk. The treatments and conditions include: Stage 3-4 Pressure Sores; Intravenous or Parenteral Feeding; Intravenous Medications; End-stage Care; Daily Tracheostomy Care, Daily Respiratory Care, Daily Suctioning; Pneumonia within the Last 14 Days; Daily Oxygen Therapy; Daily Insulin with Two Order Changes in the Last 14 Days; and Peritoneal or Hemodialysis.

4.5 DOOR 5: SKILLED REHABILITATION THERAPIES

Door 5 assesses the presence of rehabilitation interventions, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy.

4.6 DOOR 6: BEHAVIOR

Door 6 assesses behavioral challenges. It includes five behavioral symptoms: wandering, verbal abuse, physical abuse, socially inappropriate or disruptive behavior, and resistance to care. Door 6 also assesses for the presence of delusions and hallucinations.

4.7 DOOR 7: SERVICE DEPENDENCY

Door 7 applies to beneficiaries currently receiving other services and supports in nursing facilities, MI Choice, PACE, or the MI Health Link HCBS Waiver program. It assesses the beneficiary's dependence on services to maintain the current level of functioning and whether there are options for maintaining the level of functioning with services and supports available in the community.

4.8 DOOR 8: FRAILTY

MDHHS or its designee determined that the beneficiary is eligible for Medicaid LTSS services based upon the Frailty Criteria. Individuals who exhibit certain behaviors and treatment characteristics that indicate frailty may be admitted or enrolled to LTSS programs requiring an LOCD. The individual needs to trigger one element of this criteria to be considered for Frailty. Refer to the Michigan Medicaid Nursing Facility Level of Care Determination Exception Process on the MDHHS website for more information. (Refer to the Directory Appendix for website information.) For the MI Health Link program, the Frailty Criteria are applied by the Integrated Care Organization.

4.9 DOOR 0: INELIGIBLE

The LOCD was conducted and the beneficiary did not meet the criteria for any of the doors. The beneficiary is not eligible for Medicaid LTSS services at this time. (Refer to the Individual Does Not Meet LOCD Criteria, Action Notices, and Appeal Rights section for additional information.)

4.10 DOOR 87: ELIGIBLE PENDING FACE-TO-FACE REASSESSMENT

The passive redetermination process could not confirm eligibility. The provider has 45 days from the date of the

passive redetermination or until the current End Date, whichever is earlier, to conduct a new face-to-face assessment.

*MPM, July 1, 2021 version
MI Choice Waiver Chapter, pages 1, 9-10*

Here, Respondent and the contract agency determined that Petitioner did not pass through any of the above doors of need in the September 13, 2021 LOCD and that he was therefore ineligible for the MI Choice Program.

In appealing that decision, Petitioner bears the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence that Respondent erred. Moreover, the undersigned Administrative Law Judge is limited to reviewing the decision in light of the information that was available at the time the decision was made.

Given the available information and applicable policies in this case, Petitioner has failed to meet that burden of proof and Respondent's decision must be affirmed.

While, as testified to by Petitioner and his representative, Petitioner may need assistance with some activities, there is no evidence that, at the time of the LOCD at issue in this case, that Petitioner needed assistance with any of the specific tasks identified in Door 1.

Moreover, nothing in the record suggests that, during the relevant look-back periods, that Petitioner's medical conditions, or the effects of those conditions, met the criteria for passing through Doors 2, 4, or 6. At most, Petitioner testified that he has sores without any evidence that he had Stage 3-4 pressure sores required to pass through Door 4.

Similarly, nothing in the record suggests that, during the relevant look-back periods, that any medical treatment Petitioner received met the criteria required by Doors 3, 4, 5 or 6. For example, while Petitioner's representative noted frequent physician visits for Petitioner, there was no evidence presented regarding a sufficient number of visits or orders during the relevant look-back period and Respondent's witnesses credibly testified that the finding for Door 3 was based on what was reported. Additionally, while Petitioner asserted that he needs skilled rehabilitation therapies, and that only his lack of transportation is preventing him from completing it, there was no evidence of any skilled therapies administered or scheduled as required to pass through Door 5.

Finally, as Petitioner has not been a waiver or PACE participant, or a nursing facility resident, for over a year, he did not pass through Door 7.

To the extent Petitioner and his representative have additional or updated information to provide, then they can always request services again in the future along with that information. With respect to the decision at issue in this case however, Respondent's decision must be affirmed given the available information and applicable policies.

DECISION AND ORDER

The Administrative Law Judge, based on the above Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, decides that Respondent properly found Petitioner ineligible for services through the MI Choice Waiver Program.

IT IS, THEREFORE, ORDERED that:

Respondent's decision is **AFFIRMED**.

SK/sb


Steven Kibit
Administrative Law Judge

NOTICE OF APPEAL: A party may appeal this Order in circuit court within 30 days of the receipt date. A copy of the circuit court appeal must be filed with the Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules (MOAHR).

A party may request a rehearing or reconsideration of this Order if the request is received by MOAHR within 30 days of the date the Order was issued. The party requesting a rehearing or reconsideration must provide the specific reasons for the request. MOAHR will not review any response to a request for rehearing/reconsideration.

A written request may be mailed or faxed to MOAHR. If submitted by fax, the written request must be faxed to (517) 763-0155; Attention: MOAHR Rehearing/Reconsideration Request.

If submitted by mail, the written request must be addressed as follows:

Michigan Office of Administrative Hearings and Rules
Reconsideration/Rehearing Request
P.O. Box 30763
Lansing, Michigan 48909-8139

DHHS -Dept Contact

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