

**FILED**

Mar 06, 2019

Office of Appeal Hearings  
Dept. of Children and Families

STATE OF FLORIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
OFFICE OF APPEAL HEARINGS

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

APPEAL NO. 18N-00167

PETITIONER,

Vs.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

RESPONDENT.

\_\_\_\_\_ /

**FINAL ORDER**

Pursuant to notice, the undersigned convened an administrative hearing in the above-referenced matter on January 23, 2019 at 10:58 a.m. All parties appeared telephonically from different locations.

**APPEARANCES**

For the Petitioner: [REDACTED]

For the Respondent: [REDACTED]

**STATEMENT OF ISSUE**

At issue is whether the nursing home's action to transfer and discharge the petitioner is an appropriate action based on the federal regulations at 42 C.F.R. § 483.15. The nursing home is seeking to transfer the and discharge the petitioner because the safety of other individuals in the facility is endangered. The burden of proof is assigned to the facility by clear and convincing evidence.

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

By Nursing Home Transfer and Discharge Notice, dated November 28, 2018, the respondent informed the petitioner that she was to be discharged from the facility effective December 28, 2018. On December 10, 2018, the petitioner timely requested an appeal to challenge the respondent's action.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

The petitioner submitted a two-page exhibit, which was marked and entered as Petitioner's Exhibit "1". The respondent submitted an eight-page evidence packet, which was marked and entered as Respondent's Exhibits "1" through "3". The hearing officer submitted a one-page exhibit, which was marked and entered as Hearing Officer's Exhibit "1".

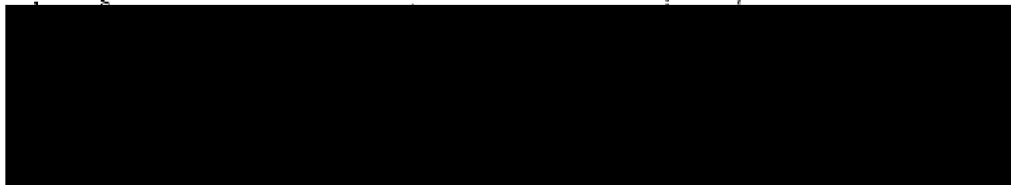
**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. On April 23, 2018, the petitioner was admitted to the nursing facility. The petitioner is alert and makes her own healthcare decisions.
2. The petitioner (67 years old) can complete her activities of daily living (ADLs) for herself. The respondent feels she would benefit from an assisted living facility (ALF) setting.
3. On November 7, 2018, the petitioner signed a Resident/Patient, Family & Visitor Smoking Safety Education & Acknowledgement form agreeing to follow the facility's smoking policy. The form indicates the following (Respondent's Exhibit 3):

**GUIDELINES**

1. Smoking or tobacco materials should be labeled with the resident's/ name and will be maintained in a secure location. Residents may not keep any smoking or tobacco materials in their room, or on their person, to include but may not be limited to: lighters, matches, cigarettes, pipes, cigars, e-cigarettes or any other smoking materials. Facility staff will provide materials and assist each resident as needed during the posted smoking times, in the designated area.
2. Staff member assigned to monitor the smoking area and distribute cigarettes, e-cigarette and or chewing tobacco will, in addition, supervise by conducting walking rounds to observe and intervene for safety issues. Staff will light the cigarette, cigar, etc.
3. If the resident is receiving oxygen, staff members will assist with removal prior to entering the designated smoking area. Once the smoking session is completed the staff will assist in reapplying the oxygen as ordered once the resident has exited the designated smoking area. Oxygen is not permitted in the designated smoking area. Obtain a physician's order to remove oxygen if the resident is on continuous oxygen.
4. Family members or visitors may accompany the resident/ to the designated smoking area at designated smoking times, however smoking assistance should not be provided by visitors. Staff member(s) in attendance will provide the needed smoking assistance.
5. Residents/, families or visitors should not provide assistance with or distribute smoking material to any residents wishing to smoke.
6. Staff will ensure the availability of Stop and Watch tools or report changes in condition to nursing personnel.

I have read the above and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I agree to abide by the facility policy. I understand that failure to abide by this policy could lead to restriction of smoking privileges and/or discharge from the facility.



4. Residents are prohibited from possessing cigarettes, lighters, and any other smoking materials on their person or in their room. Residents are only allowed to smoke during designated times and in designated areas. A staff member must be present during smoking periods.

5. The respondent contends the petitioner has not been compliant with smoking policy. The respondent claims the petitioner was carrying her smoking materials in her purse, lighting cigarettes for other residents and sharing smoking materials.

6. The petitioner states after she signed the notice, she was noncompliant for a while. However, now she is compliant and has stopped smoking.

7. The respondent also claims the petitioner smokes on the porch, in the street in front of the building, which are not designated smoking areas.

8. On November 28, 2018, a Nursing Home Transfer and Discharge notice was issued to the petitioner. The reason listed on the discharge was the safety of other individuals in this facility is endangered. There was brief explanation: "Not following Smoking Policy". [REDACTED] The petitioner declined signature (Respondent's Exhibit 1).

9. The petitioner timely requested the appeal.

10. The petitioner states she was not compliant, but she has become compliant since receiving the discharge notice.

11. As of the day of this hearing, the petitioner remains in the facility pending a hearing decision.

12. ACHA completed an on-site inspection of the facility. There were no violations found related to this discharge (Hearing Officer's Exhibit 1).

#### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

13. The Department of Children and Families, Office of Appeal Hearings has jurisdiction over the subject matter of this proceeding and the parties, pursuant to Section 409.285, Fla. Stat.

14. This order is the final administrative decision of the Department of Children and Families under Section 409.285, Fla. Stat.

15. This proceeding is a de novo proceeding pursuant to Fla. Admin. Code R. 65-2.056.

16. Federal Regulations at 42 C. F. R. § 483.15, Admission, transfer and discharge rights in relevant part states:

(c) *Transfer and discharge*—(1) *Facility requirements*—(i) The facility must permit each resident to remain in the facility, and not transfer or discharge the resident from the facility unless—

...

**(D) The health of individuals in the facility would otherwise be endangered;** (emphasis added)

...

(2) *Documentation*. When the facility transfers or discharges a resident under any of the circumstances specified in paragraphs (c)(1)(i)(A) through (F) of this section, the facility must ensure that the transfer or discharge is documented in the resident's medical record and appropriate information is communicated to the receiving health care institution or provider.

(i) Documentation in the resident's medical record must include:

(A) The basis for the transfer per paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section.

...

(ii) The documentation required by paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section must be made by—

...

**(B) A physician when transfer or discharge is necessary under paragraph (c)(1)(i)(C) or (D) of this section** (emphasis added).

...

(3) *Notice before transfer*. Before a facility transfers or discharges a resident, the facility must—

(i) Notify the resident and the resident's representative(s) of the transfer or discharge and the reasons for the move in writing and in a language and manner they understand. The facility must send a copy of the notice to a representative of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman.

(ii) Record the reasons for the transfer or discharge in the resident's medical record in accordance with paragraph (c)(2) of this section; and

(iii) Include in the notice the items described in paragraph (c)(5) of this section.

(4) *Timing of the notice*. (i) Except as specified in paragraphs (c)(4)(ii) and (8) of this section, the notice of transfer or discharge required under this section must be made by the facility at least 30 days before the resident is transferred or discharged.

(ii) Notice must be made as soon as practicable before transfer or discharge when—

(A) The safety of individuals in the facility would be endangered under paragraph (c)(1)(i)(C) of this section;

(B) The health of individuals in the facility would be endangered, under paragraph (c)(1)(i)(D) of this section;

...

(5) *Contents of the notice.* The written notice specified in paragraph (c)(3) of this section must include the following:

(i) The reason for transfer or discharge;

(ii) The effective date of transfer or discharge;

(iii) The location to which the resident is transferred or discharged;

(iv) A statement of the resident's appeal rights, including the name, address (mailing and email), and telephone number of the entity which receives such requests; and information on how to obtain an appeal form and assistance in completing the form and submitting the appeal hearing request;

(v) The name, address (mailing and email) and telephone number of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman;

(vi) For nursing facility residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities or related disabilities, the mailing and email address and telephone number of the agency responsible for the protection and advocacy of individuals with developmental disabilities established under Part C of the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (Pub. L. 106-402, codified at 42 U.S.C. 15001 *et seq.*); and

(vii) For nursing facility residents with a mental disorder or related disabilities, the mailing and email address and telephone number of the agency responsible for the protection and advocacy of individuals with a mental disorder established under the Protection and Advocacy for Mentally Ill Individuals Act.

17. On November 28, 2018, the facility issues a discharge notice to the petitioner. The facility's reason for discharging the petitioner is the safety of other individuals in this

facility is endangered. This is one of the reasons permitted for discharge from a facility in accordance with the above federal regulation.

18. Section 400.02555, Florida Statutes, Resident transfer or discharge; requirements and procedures; hearings in part states:

(3) When a discharge or transfer is initiated by the nursing home, the nursing home administrator employed by the nursing home that is discharging or transferring the resident, or an individual employed by the nursing home who is designated by the nursing home administrator to act on behalf of the administration, must sign the notice of discharge or transfer. Any notice indicating a medical reason for transfer or discharge must either be signed by the resident's attending physician or the medical director of the facility or include an attached written order for the discharge or transfer. The notice or the order must be signed by the resident's physician, medical director, treating physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant.

...

(7) At least 30 days prior to any proposed transfer or discharge, a facility must provide advance notice of the proposed transfer or discharge to the resident and, if known, to a family member or the resident's legal guardian or representative, except, in the following circumstances, the facility shall give notice as soon as practicable before the transfer or discharge:

...

(b) The health or safety of other residents or facility employees would be endangered, and the circumstances are documented in the resident's medical records by the resident's physician or the medical director if the resident's physician is not available.

...

(b) If a resident requests a hearing within 10 days after receiving the notice from the facility, the request shall stay the proposed transfer or discharge pending a hearing decision. The facility may not take action, and the resident may remain in the facility, until the outcome of the initial fair hearing, which must be completed within 90 days after receipt of a request for a fair hearing.

19. In accordance with the above federal regulation and statute, the notice was signed by a physician. The notice also indicated the reasons and effective date of the

discharge, the location to which the petitioner is to be discharged, and the petitioner's appeal rights along with other required assistance information.

20. The undersigned reviewed the findings and evidence regarding the discharge reason. The findings show the petitioner was aware of the smoking policy. Through her own testimony, the petitioner acknowledged that she violated the smoking policy after she was advised of the smoking rules.

21. After careful review of the testimony, evidence, and controlling authorities, the undersigned concludes the nursing facility has correctly established that the safety of other individuals in the facility would be endangered due to violation of the smoking policy.

22. Any discharge by the nursing facility must comply with all applicable federal regulations, Florida Statutes, and Agency for Health Care Administration requirements. Should the resident have concerns about the appropriateness of the discharge location or the discharge planning process, the resident may contact the Agency for Health Care Administration's health care facility complaint line at (888) 419-3456.

23. Establishing that the reason for a discharge is lawful is just one step in the discharge process. The nursing home must also provide discharge planning, which includes identifying an appropriate transfer or discharge location and sufficiently preparing the affected resident for a safe and orderly transfer or discharge from the facility. The hearing officer in this case cannot and has not considered either of these issues. The hearing officer has considered only whether the discharge is for a lawful reason.

**DECISION**

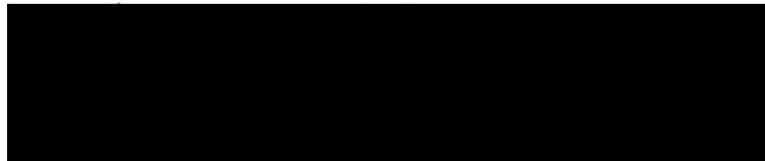
Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the appeal is hereby DENIED, as the facility's action to discharge the petitioner is correct and in accordance with Federal Regulations. The facility may proceed with the discharge as discussed in the Conclusions of Law, in accordance with applicable Agency of Health Care Administration requirements.

**NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL**

This decision is final and binding on the part of the Department. If the petitioner disagrees with this decision, the petitioner may seek a judicial review. To begin the judicial review, the petitioner must file one copy of a "Notice of Appeal" with the Office of Appeal Hearings, Bldg. 5, Rm. 255, 1317 Winewood Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32399-0700. The petitioner must also file another copy of the "Notice of Appeal" with the appropriate District Court of Appeal. The Notices must be filed within thirty (30) days of the date stamped on the first page of the final order. The petitioner must either pay the court fees required by law or seek an order of indigency to waive those fees. The petitioner is responsible for any financial obligations incurred as the Department has no funds to assist in this review.

DONE and ORDERED this 06 day of March, 2019,

in Tallahassee, Florida.



Hearing Officer  
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FINAL ORDER (Cont.)

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