

FILED

Jan 11, 2023

Office of Appeal Hearings
Dept. of Children and Families

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

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

APPEAL NO. 22N-00044
APPEAL NO. 22N-00085

PETITIONER,

Vs.

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

RESPONDENT.

_____ /

FINAL ORDER

Pursuant to notice, the undersigned convened a telephonic nursing home discharge hearing in the above-referenced matter on December 14, 2022, at 11:44 a.m.

APPEARANCES

For the petitioner: [REDACTED], pro se

For the respondent: Hayley Cross, Regional Administrator

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

The petitioner appeals the respondent's action to discharge him from The [REDACTED] (the "Facility") due to nonpayment for services. The respondent carries the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence.

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Kim Simmons, Nursing Home Administrator was also present for the Nursing Facility.

██████████, friend was present as a witness for the petitioner. ██████████
██████████ father and ██████████, mother, were also present as witnesses for the
petitioner.

The petitioner did not submit any evidence. The respondent submitted four (4)
packets which were entered into evidence and marked as Respondent's Exhibits one
("1") through seventeen ("17").

Two prior continuances were granted for good cause, one to the petitioner and
the other to the respondent.

Appeal number 22N-00044 was dismissed as abandoned due to the
respondent's no show; however, good cause was established and the appeal was
reopened and rescheduled. The petitioner submitted another appeal while the initial
appeal was being processed, and the second appeal was assigned the number 22N-
00085. Both appeals were for the same discharge issue related non-pay of bills for
services; therefore, both appeals were addressed during the hearing and will be ruled
on as one and the same.

Petitioner's Position

The petitioner believes he should not have to pay most of his Social Security
check to the facility. He disagrees that he is only allowed to keep \$130.00 per month.
The petitioner believes that he not getting the care and medical treatment he needs to
get better.

Respondent's Position

The respondent issued two discharge notices to the petitioner, one on May 19,
2022, and another on October 5, 2022, because the petitioner was not willing to make

payments towards his outstanding balance for services he received. The facility has issued monthly billing statements to the petitioner outlining his outstanding balances for services. These statements were issued in person and by mail.

FINDINGS OF FACT¹

Based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the final hearing and on the entire record of this proceeding, the following findings of fact are made:

1. On March 18, 2021, the petitioner was admitted to the respondent's Facility as a Medicare patient. He received skilled services. All services provided to him by the Facility were fully paid by Medicare. (Resp't Test. December 14, 2022.)
2. On May 22, 2021, the petitioner was converted to a Medicaid patient as he was no longer receiving skilled services. (Resp't Test. December 14, 2022.)
3. On March 1, 2022, the facility issued the petitioner a monthly statement informing him that he owed the facility \$1,264.00 for services he received. The Facility continued to provide the petitioner with monthly statements of his outstanding balance. (Resp't Exs. 4 and 17.)
4. In March 2022, the petitioner paid \$905.00 towards his outstanding balance. He has not made any other payment towards his outstanding balance. (Resp't Test. December 14, 2022.)
5. On May 19, 2022, the respondent issued a Nursing Home Transfer and Discharge Notice ("Notice") in person, informing the petitioner that he was to be discharged from the facility effective June 18, 2022. The reason cited was "Your bill for

¹ Citations within the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law in this order follow Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure 9.800 and *The Bluebook: A Uniform System of Citation* as the standard for citation.

services at this facility has not been paid after reasonable and appropriate notice to pay.” (Resp’t Ex. 2.)

6. On May 26, 2022, the petitioner timely requested an appeal to challenge the respondent’s action. (Appeal R.)

7. On October 5, 2022, the respondent issued a second Notice to the petitioner. The effective date of discharge was November 4, 2022. The reason listed on the notice was “Your bill for services at this facility has not been paid after reasonable and appropriate notice to pay.” (Resp’t Ex. 16.)

8. The petitioner admitted that he has not made payment towards his outstanding balance since March 2022. The petitioner refuses to make payments to the facility as he believes that Medicaid has adequately compensated the Facility for the services he received. The petitioner believes he is receiving substandard service at the Facility. (Pet’r Test. December 14, 2022.)

9. The petitioner owes the facility \$13,646.76 as of December 14, 2022. (Resp’t Test. December 14, 2022.)

CONTROLLING LAW

10. The Department of Children and Families, Office of Appeal Hearings, has jurisdiction over the subject matter of this proceeding and the parties; this order is the final administrative decision of the Department of Children and Families pursuant to Section 409.285, Florida Statutes.

11. Florida Statutes Section 400.0255, Resident transfer or discharge; requirements and procedures; hearings, states in part:

(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...

(8) The notice required by subsection (7) must be in writing and must contain all information required by state and federal law, rules, or regulations applicable to Medicaid or Medicare cases. The agency shall develop a standard document to be used by all facilities licensed under this part for purposes of notifying residents of a discharge or transfer. Such document must include a means for a resident to request the local long-term care ombudsman council to review the notice and request information about or assistance with initiating a fair hearing with the department's Office of Appeals Hearings. In addition to any other pertinent information included, the form shall specify the reason allowed under federal or state law that the resident is being discharged or transferred, with an explanation to support this action. Further, the form must state the effective date of the discharge or transfer and the location to which the resident is being discharged or transferred. The form must clearly describe the resident's appeal rights and the procedures for filing an appeal, including the right to request the local ombudsman council review the notice of discharge or transfer. A copy of the notice must be placed in the resident's clinical record, and a copy must be transmitted to the resident's legal guardian or representative and to the local ombudsman council within 5 business days after signature by the resident or resident designee.

12. Title 42 Code of Federal Regulations Section 483.15, Admission, transfer and discharge rights, states in relevant part:

(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—

(A) The transfer or discharge is necessary for the resident's welfare and the resident's needs cannot be met in the facility;

(B) The transfer or discharge is appropriate because the resident's

- health has improved sufficiently so the resident no longer needs the services provided by the facility;
- (C) The safety of individuals in the facility is endangered due to the clinical or behavioral status of the resident;
- (D) The health of individuals in the facility would otherwise be endangered;
- (E) The resident has failed, after reasonable and appropriate notice, to pay for (or to have paid under Medicare or Medicaid) a stay at the facility. Non-payment applies if the resident does not submit the necessary paperwork for third party payment or after the third party, including Medicare or Medicaid, denies the claim and the resident refuses to pay for his or her stay. For a resident who becomes eligible for Medicaid after admission to a facility, the facility may charge a resident only allowable charges under Medicaid; or**
- (F) The facility ceases to operate...

[Emphasis added]

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

13. On May 19, 2022, the Facility hand delivered to petitioner the Nursing Home Transfer and Discharge Notice. The Facility's reason for discharging the petitioner is that bills for services rendered had not been paid after reasonable and appropriate notice to pay. This is one reason permitted for discharge from the Facility in accordance with the above Federal Regulation.
14. In accordance with the above Federal Regulation and State Statute, the Notice was signed by the Facility Administrator thirty days prior to the discharge date. The Notice also indicated the reason, effective date of the discharge, and appeal rights.
15. Establishing that the reason(s) for a discharge is lawful is just one step in the discharge process. The Facility must also identify an appropriate transfer or discharge location and a safe and orderly transfer or discharge from the facility. The undersigned cannot and has not considered either of these issues. The undersigned only considered whether the discharge was for a lawful reason(s) and that the requirements of the controlling authorities have been met.

16. Discharge by the Facility must comply with all applicable Federal Regulations, Florida Statutes, and Agency for Health Care Administration requirements. Should the petitioner have concerns about the appropriateness of the discharge location or the discharge process, he may contact the Agency for Health Care Administration's health care facility complaint line at (888) 419-3456.

17. In accordance with the above authorities, the Facility seeks to involuntarily discharge the petitioner because payment for services rendered has remained unpaid after reasonable and appropriate notice to pay. The evidence submitted establishes that the petitioner has an outstanding balance of \$13,646.76 for services through December 2022. The petitioner was aware that he had an outstanding balance. The evidence shows as of May 19, 2022, when the Discharge Notice was issued to the petitioner, he was aware that he had an outstanding balance for services he received at the Facility. The petitioner has not made any payments towards his outstanding balance since March 2022.

18. After careful review of the evidence and testimony, the undersigned concludes that the respondent met its burden of proof. The undersigned concludes that the respondent's discharge of the petitioner for non-payment of a bill for services is proper.

DECISION

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, this appeal is DENIED. The Facility's action to discharge the petitioner is in accordance with Federal Regulations. The Facility may proceed with its proposed discharge action.

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL

The decision of the hearing officer is final. Any aggrieved party may appeal the decision to the district court of appeals in the appellate district where the facility is located. Review procedures shall be in accordance with the Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure. To begin the judicial review, the party must file one copy of a "Notice of Appeal" with the Office of Appeal Hearings, Suite I, Room 129, 2415 North Monroe Street, Tallahassee, FL 32303-4190. The party 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 department has no funds to assist in this review, and any financial obligations incurred will be the party's responsibility.

DONE and ORDERED this 11 day of January, 2023,

in Tallahassee, Florida.



Christiana Gopaul Narine
Hearing Officer
Suite I, Room 129
2415 North Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32303-4190
Office: 850-488-1429
Fax: 850-487-0662
Email: Appeal.Hearings@myflfamilies.com

Copies Furnished To: [REDACTED], Petitioner
[REDACTED], Respondent
Ms. Arlene Mayo-Davis
Agency for Health Care Administration