



STATE OF FLORIDA  
AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE ADMINISTRATION  
OFFICE OF FAIR HEARINGS

FILED

Apr 28, 2023, 1:18 pm

OFFICE OF FAIR HEARINGS

[REDACTED]

PETITIONER,

AHCA Case No.: 23-FH0345

vs.

AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE  
ADMINISTRATION,

RESPONDENT.

\_\_\_\_\_ /

**FINAL ORDER**

Pursuant to notice, the undersigned convened a telephonic Fair Hearing on the instant case on April 5, 2023, at 9:01 a.m. Eastern Standard Time ("EST").

**APPEARANCES**

For the Petitioner:

[REDACTED]

Petitioner's Authorized Representative

For the Respondent:

Chrissie Simmons  
Medical/Health Care Program Analyst  
Agency for Health Care Administration

**STATEMENT OF ISSUE**

The issue is whether Petitioner proved by a preponderance of the evidence that the Respondent's denial of Petitioner's For Cause disenrollment request was incorrect.

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

All parties appeared telephonically. Petitioner's Authorized Representative and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (" [REDACTED] ") appeared on behalf of the Petitioner.

Chrissie Simmons (“Ms. Simmons”), Medical/Health Care Program Analyst and Fair Hearing Liaison with the Agency for Healthcare Administration (“Agency” or “AHCA”), appeared on behalf of Respondent.

Petitioner did not introduce any exhibits at the hearing. Prior to the hearing, Respondent sent to the Office of Fair Hearings and Petitioner a sixteen (16) page evidence packet. The sixteen (16) page evidence packet appears in the Office of Fair Hearings’ document management system as file title “23-FH0345\_AHCA Evidence for [Petitioner].pdf”. Absent an objection from Petitioner, the undersigned admitted the sixteen (16) page evidence packet into evidence as Respondent’s Composite Exhibit 1 (“RCE 1”).

#### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Petitioner is an enrolled member of MCNA Dental Plan (“MCNA”). See page 12 of RCE 1. MCNA is a managed care organization contracted by the Agency to provide services to eligible Medicaid recipients in Florida.

2. On February 8, 2023, [REDACTED] filed a grievance with MCNA. *Id.* at 1, 12. On February 10, 2023, MCNA issued to [REDACTED] a Grievance Acknowledgement Letter. *Id.* at 12. The Grievance Acknowledgement Letter reads as follows in pertinent part:

Thank you for writing to us. MCNA got your grievance letter dated February 8, 2023. We are looking into your grievance and will give you or your authorized representative our written decision within 30 days from the date we received your grievance.

...

Page 12 of RCE 1.

3. On February 14, 2023, [REDACTED] requested to change Petitioner’s Medicaid plan from MCNA to DentaQuest Dental Plan (“DentaQuest”). *Id.* at 1. Petitioner requested the change due

to the lack of access to dental care plan providers experienced in dealing with the enrollee's health care needs. *Id.*

4. On February 16, 2023, the Agency denied Petitioner's request for failure to complete the managed care plan's grievance process as required. *Id.* On February 17, 2023, the Agency issued to Petitioner a letter of Denial of For Cause Plan Change. *Id.* at 2. The letter reads as follows in pertinent part:

The reason given for the requested For Cause plan change, outside of your Open Enrollment period, was there is a lack of access to managed care plan providers experienced in dealing with the enrollee's health care needs. The Agency has considered your request and denied it as it does not meet the requirements for a For Cause plan change as outlined in Rule 59G-8.600. The request was denied because the enrollee failed to go through the managed care plan's Grievance process as required (See Rule 59G-8.600(3)(b)4).

...

Page 2 of RCE 1.

5. On February 21, 2023, [REDACTED] requested a Fair Hearing on behalf of Petitioner regarding the denial of a For Cause disenrollment request. *Id.* at 1. On March 13, 2023, the undersigned issued an Order Scheduling Hearing by Telephone and Prehearing Instructions, scheduling the hearing for April 5, 2023, at 9:00 a.m. EST.

6. [REDACTED] is the [REDACTED] of the Petitioner. [REDACTED] testified to the following at the Fair Hearing:

- a. Petitioner was disenrolled from [REDACTED] previous plan, DentaQuest, and enrolled in the current plan, MCNA, without [REDACTED]'s knowledge or authorization.
- b. Petitioner's previous provider specializes in treating children [REDACTED].
- c. Petitioner filed a grievance with the plan and received a denial.

7. Ms. Simmons is a Medical/Health Care Program Analyst with the Agency. Ms. Simmons testified to the following at the Fair Hearing:

- a. On February 14, 2023, [REDACTED] requested a plan change on behalf of Petitioner.
- b. On February 16, 2023, the request was reviewed and denied for failure to complete the plan's required grievance process.
- c. On February 17, 2023, a denial letter was issued to [REDACTED]. On February 21, 2023, [REDACTED] requested a Fair Hearing.
- d. [REDACTED] submitted [REDACTED] plan change request before [REDACTED] completed the grievance process. [REDACTED] did not wait the necessary thirty (30) days for the plan to issue a resolution before requesting a For Cause plan change.
- e. On December 14, 2022, [REDACTED] requested to change plans from DentaQuest to MCNA with an effective date of February 1, 2023.

#### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

8. The Agency's Office of Fair Hearings has jurisdiction over the subject matter of this proceeding and the parties pursuant to section 409.285(2) of the Florida Statutes (2019). This order is the final administrative decision of AHCA under Fla. Stat. § 409.285(2)(a).

9. This hearing was held as a *de novo* proceeding pursuant to Fla. Admin. Code R. 59G-1.100(17)(b).

10. Because Petitioner is requesting a change of managed medical care plans outside of their enrollment period, Fla. Admin. Code R. 59G-1.100(17)(g) assigns the burden of proof to Petitioner. The standard of proof in an administrative hearing is a preponderance of the evidence.

The preponderance of the evidence standard requires proof by “the greater weight of the evidence” (Black’s Law Dictionary at 1201, 7th Ed.).

11. Fla. Admin. Code R. 59G-8.600 governs Disenrollment from Managed Care Plans. It states the following:

(1) Purpose. A Florida Medicaid recipient (herein referred to as an enrollee) who is required to enroll in the Statewide Medicaid Managed Care (SMMC) Managed Medical Assistance (MMA) or Long-term Care (LTC) program, may request to change managed care plans. Requests must be submitted via telephone to the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) or its enrollment broker. Enrollees required to enroll in SMMC programs should not interpret this rule as an exemption from participation in Florida Medicaid’s SMMC program. This rule applies to the process and reasons that SMMC managed care plan enrollees may change plans.

(2) Requests for disenrollment must be completed in accordance with sections 409.969, Florida Statutes (F.S.), and Title 42, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), section 438.56 (42 CFR 438.56).

(3) For Cause Reasons.

(a) Reasons outlined in 42 CFR 438.569(d)(2) and Section 409.969(2), F.S., constitute cause for disenrollment at any time from a managed care plan:

1. The managed care plan does not cover the service the enrollee seeks because of moral or religious objections.
2. The enrollee would have to change his or her residential or institutional provider based on the provider’s change in status from an in-network to an out-of-network provider with the managed care plan.

3. Fraudulent enrollment.

(b) Reasons outlined in 42 CFR 438.56(d)(2) and Section 409.969(2), F.S., constitute cause for disenrollment from a managed care plan when the enrollee first seeks resolution through the managed care plan’s grievance process, as confirmed by AHCA, in accordance with 42 CFR 438.56(d)(5), except when there is an allegation of immediate risk of permanent damaged to the enrollee’s health:

1. The enrollee needs related services to be performed concurrently, but not all related services are available within the managed care plan’s network, and the enrollee’s primary care provider or another provider has determined that receiving the services separately would subject the enrollee to unnecessary risk.

2. Poor quality of care.
3. Lack of access to services covered under the managed care plan's contract with AHCA, including lack of access to medically-necessary specialty services.
4. There is a lack of access to managed care plan providers experienced in dealing with the enrollee's health care needs.
5. The enrollee experienced an unreasonable delay or denial of service pursuant to section 409.969(2), F.S.

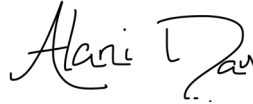
12. In this case, the evidence admitted and testimony presented is insufficient to support a *de novo* reversal of the Agency's decision, and establishes that the Petitioner's request cannot be granted. Here, Petitioner bears the burden of proof. As provided by statute, a For Cause plan change is permissible when the enrollee experiences a "lack of access to managed care plan providers experienced in dealing with the enrollee's health care needs" (Rule 59G-8.600(3)(b)4). However, the enrollee must "first [seek] resolution through the managed care plan's grievance process, as confirmed by AHCA" (Rule 59G-8.600(3)b). In the instant case, Petitioner has not completed MCNA's grievance process. Petitioner received a Grievance Acknowledgement Letter from MCNA, which stated that the plan's resolution would be provided to Petitioner within thirty (30) days from the date of receipt of the grievance. *See supra* ¶ 2. Petitioner's disenrollment and Fair Hearing requests were made prior to the plan's resolution being issued to Petitioner. As such, Petitioner has not completed the required Grievance process. Petitioner's circumstances do not satisfy the conditions for a For Cause plan change outside of the open enrollment period. Accordingly, the undersigned finds that Petitioner did not prove by a preponderance of the evidence that Respondent's denial of Petitioner's For Cause disenrollment request was incorrect.

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AND ADJUDGED THAT:**

Respondent's denial of Petitioner's For Cause disenrollment request is **AFFIRMED**.

Petitioner's appeal based on Respondent's denial is **DENIED**.

**DONE and ORDERED** this 28th day of April, 2023, in Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida.



Alani Day  
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**ALANI DAY, Hearing Officer**  
**Agency for Health Care Administration**  
**Office of Fair Hearings**  
**2727 Mahan Drive, Mail Stop # 11**  
**Tallahassee, FL 32308-5407**

**NOTICE OF A RIGHT TO JUDICIAL REVIEW**

A PARTY WHO IS ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THIS FINAL ORDER IS ENTITLED TO JUDICIAL REVIEW, WHICH SHALL BE INSTITUTED BY FILING THE ORIGINAL NOTICE OF APPEAL WITH THE AGENCY CLERK OF AHCA, AND A COPY, ALONG WITH THE FILING FEE PRESCRIBED BY LAW, WITH THE DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL IN THE APPELLATE DISTRICT WHERE THE AGENCY MAINTAINS ITS HEADQUARTERS OR WHERE A PARTY RESIDES. REVIEW PROCEEDINGS SHALL BE CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FLORIDA APPELLATE RULES. THE NOTICE OF APPEAL MUST BE FILED WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THE RENDITION OF THE ORDER TO BE REVIEWED.

**Copies Furnished To:**



**AHCA Medicaid Hearing Unit**  
**MedicaidHearingUnit@ahca.myflorida.com**