

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



FILED

Apr 07, 2023, 11:27 am

OFFICE OF FAIR HEARINGS

PETITIONER,

AHCA Case No.: 23-FH0594

vs.

SUNSHINE STATE HEALTH PLAN, INC.,

RESPONDENT.

FINAL ORDER

On March 21, 2023, Petitioner requested a Fair Hearing based on Respondent's denial of personal care services. This request is identical to another made on December 13, 2022, which resulted in a Final Order being rendered on March 21, 2023.

The Supreme Court of the United States holds that Res Judicata "is a rule of fundamental and substantial justice, 'of public policy and of private peace,' which should be cordially regarded and enforced by the courts". *Federated Department Stores, Inc.*, 452 U.S. 394, 401, 398, 101 S.Ct. 2424, 69 L.Ed.2d 103 (1981). The Supreme Court further explained that, "[a] final judgment on the merits of an action precludes the parties or their privies from relitigating issues that were or could have been raised in that action." *Id.* 452 U.S. at 398, 101 S.Ct. 2424, 69 L.Ed.2d 103 (1981). "[R]es judicata does not require the precluded claim to actually have been litigated; its concern, rather, is that the party against whom the doctrine is asserted had a full and fair opportunity to litigate the claim." *EDP Med. Comput. Sys., Inc. v. United States*, 480 F.3d 621, 624 (2d Cir. 2007). In other words, rehearing issues of fact or law is prohibited if the parties already had an opportunity to litigate those issues and a valid and final determination was made with respect to

those issues. *B & B Hardware, Inc. v. Hargis Indus., Inc.*, 135 S.Ct. 1293, 1303 (2015). The test to determine whether an order is final in nature is whether the case is disposed of by the order. *Taylor v. Dept. of Children and Families*, 81 So. 3d 566 (Fla. 4th DCA 2012); citing *Hill v. Div. of Retirement*, 502 So. 2d 456 (Fla. 1st DCA 1986). “It is now well settled that res judicata may be applied in administrative proceedings.” *Thomson v. Department of Environmental Regulation*, 511 So.2d 989, 991 (Fla. 1987); and see Restatement (Second) of Judgments § 83 *Adjudicative Determination by Administrative Tribunal* (1982).

In the context of Fair Hearings before the Agency for Health Care Administration (“Agency” or “AHCA”), Rule 59G-1.100(14)(b), Florida Administrative Code, states that “[t]he Hearing Officer may find that a Fair Hearing is abandoned if the recipient or enrollee fails to appear at a properly noticed Fair Hearing without good cause.” *Accord* 42 C.F.R. § 431.223 (2017). Rule 59G-1.100(18)(h), Florida Administrative Code, states that “[r]ehearing or reconsideration of a Final Order is prohibited under this rule.” Consistent with Res Judicata, this prevents duplicative testimony and judgments made with respect to a Final Order already rendered.

In the instant case, the Notice of Adverse Benefit Determination (“NABD”) is dated November 21, 2022, and the Notice of Plan Appeal Resolution (“NPAR”) is dated December 7, 2022. However, the records of the Office of Fair Hearings show that on December 13, 2022, Petitioner requested a Fair Hearing based on the same denial of personal care services in AHCA Case Number 22-FH2289. The relevant NABD is dated November 21, 2022, and the NPAR is dated December 7, 2022, which are identical to the instant case. A Final Order was rendered in AHCA Case Number 22-FH2289 on March 21, 2023, after a Fair Hearing scheduled on March 8, 2023,

was conducted whereat Petitioner failed to appear without good cause.¹ The Final Order of March 21, 2023, held that Petitioner had abandoned the Fair Hearing and adjudged the matter closed. Because the Fair Hearing of March 8, 2023, afforded Petitioner a full and fair opportunity to litigate the issues raised in the subject NABD and NPAR, the undersigned concludes that Res Judicata bars the rehearing of the claim in the instant case.

On March 22, 2023, the undersigned issued an Order to Show Cause (“Order”) why the Fair Hearing request should not be dismissed under the doctrine of Res Judicata and Rule 59G-1.00(18)(h), Florida Administrative Code. The Order notified Petitioner that failure to comply with the Order on or before April 3, 2023, would result in dismissal of the case.

In this case, the Office of Fair Hearings did not receive, on or before April 3, 2023, a response to the Order.

Based on the foregoing,


IT IS HEREBY ORDERED AND ADJUDGED THAT:

The case is dismissed and is now closed.

DONE and ORDERED this 7th day of April, 2023 in Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida.

Laura Gallagher

23-FH0594

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

¹ The Final Order of March 21, 2023, concludes with a “NOTICE OF RIGHT TO JUDICIAL REVIEW”, wherein instructions and the time frame for further review of that Final Order is provided.

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 (w/ enclosure):

[REDACTED]
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