



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

FILED

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[Redacted]

PETITIONER,

OFFICE OF FAIR HEARINGS
AHCA Case No.: 24-FH1950

vs.

AGENCY FOR HEALTH CARE
ADMINISTRATION,

RESPONDENT.

_____ /

FINAL ORDER

Pursuant to notice, the undersigned Hearing Officer convened a telephonic Fair Hearing on the instant case on August 27, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. EST.

APPEARANCES

For the Petitioner:

[Redacted]

Petitioner's Authorized Representative

For the Respondent:

Marielisa Amador
Medical Health Care Provider Analyst
Fair Hearing Liaison
Agency for Health Care Administration

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

The issue is whether Respondent proved by a preponderance of the evidence that Respondent's decision to deny Petitioner's behavior analysis ("BA") services was correct.

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

All parties and witnesses appeared telephonically. Petitioner’s Authorized Representative and [REDACTED], [REDACTED], (“[REDACTED]”), appeared and testified on behalf of the Petitioner. [REDACTED], BCBA, (“[REDACTED]”) testified on behalf of the Petitioner.

Marielisa Amador, Medical Health Care Provider Analyst and Fair Hearing Liaison for the Agency for Health Care Administration (“Agency” or “AHCA”) appeared on behalf of Respondent. Dr. Joseph Darling, (“Dr. Darling”) Board Certified Behavior Analyst at the doctoral level (BCBA-D) and second level reviewer for eQHealth Solutions, Inc. (“eQHealth”), attended as a witness for Respondent.

Petitioner did not introduce any documents as evidence for the Fair Hearing.

Prior to the hearing, Respondent sent to the Office of Fair Hearings and Petitioner a one hundred and seventy-nine (179)-page evidence packet. The packet appears in the Office of Fair Hearings’ case management system as “[REDACTED] FH 08.27.2024 1-160.pdf,” and “[REDACTED] FH 08.27.2024 161-179.pdf.” Absent an objection from the Petitioner, the undersigned admitted the evidence packet into evidence as Respondent’s Composite Exhibit 1.

Prior to the hearing, Respondent sent to the Office of Fair Hearings and Petitioner a forty-nine (49)-page evidence packet. The packet appears in the Office of Fair Hearings’ case management system as “24-FH1950 AHCA Evidence (Pages 1-49 of 49).pdf.” Absent an objection from the Petitioner, the undersigned admitted the evidence packet into evidence as Respondent’s Composite Exhibit 2.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Petitioner receives Medicaid services on a fee-for-service basis from the Agency. eQHealth is a Quality Improvement Organization contracted by the Agency to review prior authorization requests for services. See Respondent's Composite Exhibit 2 at page 2.

2. Petitioner is [REDACTED]. See Respondent's Composite Exhibit 1 at page 16. The Petitioner has been diagnosed with [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. *Id.* at 16. The Petitioner has exhibited maladaptive behaviors including [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. *Id.* at 147-152.

3. Petitioner requested the following BA services: 3,640 units of code 97153, 364 units of code 97155, 364 units of 97155HN and 104 units of code 97156 for the certification period of April 29, 2024, through October 25, 2024. *Id.* at 31.

4. On May 8, 2024, Respondent issued a Notice of Outcome ("NOO"), denying Petitioner's BA services. *Id.* at 26-27. The NOO explained the basis for the termination as follows:

[T]he requested services are not medically necessary under the following standard(s):

Individualized, specific, and consistent with symptoms or confirmed diagnosis of the illness under treatment, and not in excess of the patient's needs.

...

The NOO further provided:

Submitted information does not support the medical necessity for requested frequency and/or duration.

PR Clinical Rationale – Denial:

Partial Denial

According to Behavior Analysis Services Coverage Policy page 3, 1.1 of the Policy, request for services must be made based on the medical necessity of the recipient's maladaptive behaviors and skill deficits. The recipient is engaging in problem behaviors that threaten across to typical environments and negatively

affects activities of daily living. However, the frequency, intensity, or severity of recipient's maladaptive behaviors does not justify the requested units of services. The requested units of BA services are in excess of medical necessity.

Id. at 26-27.

5. Petitioner requested reconsideration of the Respondent's decision. On May 30, 2024, Respondent issued a Notice of Reconsideration Determination ("NRD") upholding its decision. *Id.* at 38-40. The NRD states, in pertinent part as follows:

Specifically, the services must be:

Individualized, specific, and consistent with symptoms or confirmed diagnosis of the illness under treatment, and not in excess of the patient's needs.

...

PR Recon Determination: At reconsideration all documents were carefully reviewed. The provider did not submit any new documentation that supports the medical necessity of this request. According to the Behavior Analysis Services Coverage Policy, (page 3, 2.2) the recipient of ABA therapy services must engage in maladaptive behavior that interferes with the recipient's daily functioning. Although the recipient is engaging in topographies of maladaptive behaviors, the frequency and intensity of the maladaptive do not support the request for services. This reconsideration request has been reviewed, reconsidered, and the partial denial is upheld.

Id. at 39-40.

6. Dr. Darling established that eQHealth reviews behavior analysis cases to ensure that providers are giving quality care consistent with the standards enumerated in the BA Policy as well as professional medical standards of applied behavior analysis ("ABA"). eQHealth reviewed the Treatment Plan submitted in this case to determine whether all five (5) conditions of medical necessity are met. Dr. Darling asserted that Petitioner's services were denied because the treatment plan is not individualized, specific, and consistent with symptoms or confirmed diagnosis of the illness under treatment, and not in excess of the patient's needs and therefore

does not meet the conditions of being medically necessary. Dr. Darling testified that the treatment plan and services have not met the conditions of medical necessity.

7. Dr. Darling explained the review process that is followed by eQhealth. In this review, Dr. Darling testified that the 1st level reviewer found that the recipient had been diagnosed with [REDACTED] and the provider was requesting 43 hours per week of services. *Id.* at 21. Further, considering the documentation submitted, the request for services was not individualized, specific, and consistent with symptoms or confirmed diagnosis of the illness or injury under treatment, and not in excess of the patient's needs. *Id.* The first reviewer found that the treatment plan could not be approved as submitted and referred the matter to a second level reviewer. *Id.* The request was sent to a second level review. The second level reviewer is a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst at the doctoral level (BCBA-D). Dr. Darling testified that the second reviewer wrote that while the data shows evidence that the recipient is engaging in problem behaviors that negatively affects activities of daily living, the frequency, intensity, or severity of the maladaptive behavior(s) does not justify the amount of requested services. *Id.* at 22. The second level reviewer found that the requested services were in excess of the needs of the patient. The second level reviewer approved services but at a reduced amount. *Id.* A request was made for reconsideration and a third reviewer reconsidered the previous partial approval and partial denial. The third reviewer is also a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst at the doctoral level (BCBA-D). Upon reviewing all the documentation for reconsideration, the third reviewer found that the additional information submitted by the provider did not document any new support for the higher amount of requested services. In addition to confirming the previous approval/denial the third reviewer also found

that the recipient was engaging in maladaptive behaviors, but the frequency and intensity did not support the requested services. *Id.* at 22. The prior partial approval and partial denial was upheld. *Id.* at 22.

8. Dr. Darling established that an effective treatment plan is built around maladaptive behaviors (which decrease in frequency) and skills to be acquired (which increase in frequency) over the course of treatment. Dr. Darling testified that the recipient needs the benefits of ABA services. However, Dr. Darling testified that this provider's Treatment Plan with the targeted behaviors and skill replacements could be accomplished with the reduced approved service units. Dr. Darling testified that the second level and third level reviewers and he himself all agreed that the approved reduced service units were sufficient to implement the treatment plan. Any additional service units would be in excess of the patient's needs.

9. Dr. Darling reviewed the treatment plan submitted for review. Dr. Darling began with the treatment plan maladaptive behaviors. There are five listed maladaptive behaviors. (See ¶ 2.) and there are ten listed skill replacement behaviors. *Id.* at 108-114. As each of the reviewers and Dr. Darling considered the treatment plan, each individual must determine the amount of time or the number of service units necessary to properly implement the treatment plan. Dr. Darling testified that all reviewers agreed that the partial approval of 25 hours of one on one therapy and 6 hours of oversight was sufficient to implement the treatment plan as written. Further, as Dr. Darling testified, during the six month authorization as the treatment plan is working, the maladaptive behaviors decrease and more time is spent on replacement skill behaviors.

10. In summary, Dr. Darling testified that the treatment plan as submitted identified five maladaptive behaviors and ten replacement skill behaviors. The provider had requested

approximately 30 hours of one-on-one services for the recipient. Upon review of the treatment plan, Dr. Darling and the second and third level reviewers (all of whom are Board-Certified Behavior Analyst at the doctoral level BCBA-D) agreed that the reduced approval of 25 hours of one-on-one therapy would be sufficient to properly implement the treatment plan. Any hours above the 25 hours of one-on-one therapy would be in excess of the patient's needs. Of course, the approval also included additional service units (hours) for family training and lead analyst supervision and modifications.

11. [REDACTED], the Petitioner's BCBA, testified on behalf of the Petitioner. [REDACTED] gave a general description of the recipient and the harmful behaviors [REDACTED] engages in. Recently [REDACTED]

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

[REDACTED] believes that the recipient needs services during all days and at all locations. [REDACTED] does not believe that the additional 5 hours of services as requested would be in excess of the recipient's needs.

12. [REDACTED] testified on behalf of [REDACTED] testified that [REDACTED] had

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] testified that the 5 additional hours that had not been approved would be very valuable to [REDACTED]. The additional hours would allow the therapist to be more actively involved with [REDACTED] also stated that due to [REDACTED]'s

behaviors at school, [REDACTED] was constantly being called away from [REDACTED] employment in that [REDACTED] had to remove [REDACTED] from class.

13. Dr. Darling testified on rebuttal that three of the individuals that reviewed the treatment plan in this matter were Board-Certified Behavior Analyst on the doctoral level (BCBA-D) and each reviewer come to the same conclusion. Based upon the contents of the Treatment Plan, the hours or units approved would be sufficient to properly implement the plan and accomplish the goals outlined in the plan. Dr. Darling did state that if during the authorization period data and documentation supported that additional hours were needed, the provider could request a modification during the authorization period.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

14. 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), Florida Statutes (2019). This order is the final administrative decision of AHCA under section 409.285(2)(a).

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

16. Because Respondent terminated a previously approved service, Fla. Admin. Code R. 59-1.100(17)(g) assigns the burden of proof to the Respondent. 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.).

17. States must provide Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (“EPSDT”) services to Medicaid-eligible children under age 21 when requested under the Medicaid state plan. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 1396a(a)(43); 42 U.S.C. § 1396d(a)(4).

18. According to 42 U.S.C. § 1396d(r)(5), EPSDT services mean, in relevant part, the following items and services:

Such other necessary health care, diagnostic services, treatment, and other measures described in subsection (a) of this section to correct or ameliorate defects and physical and mental illness and conditions discovered by the screen services, whether or not such services are covered under the state plan.

19. A state may place medical necessity limitations on EPSDT services. *See* 42 C.F.R. §§ 440.230(a), (b), (d).

20. Section 409.905(2), Florida Statutes, limits EPSDT services with a medical necessity standard:

The [Agency] shall pay for early and periodic screening and diagnosis of a recipient under age 21 to ascertain physical and mental problems and conditions and all services determined by the agency to be medically necessary for the treatment, correction, or amelioration of these problems and conditions, including personal care, private duty nursing, durable medical equipment, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, respiratory therapy, and immunizations.

21. The Florida Medicaid Definitions Policy, incorporated by reference in Fla. Admin. Code R. 59G-1.010, defines “Medically Necessary” or “Medical Necessity” as follows:

The medical or allied care, goods, or services furnished or ordered must meet the following conditions:

- Be necessary to protect life, to prevent significant illness or significant disability, or to alleviate pain
- Be individualized, specific, and consistent with symptoms or confirmed diagnosis of the illness or injury under treatment, and not in excess of the patient’s needs

- Be consistent with generally accepted professional medical standards as determined by the Medicaid program, and not experimental or investigational
- Be reflective of the level of service that can be safely furnished, and for which no equally effective and more conservative or less costly treatment is available statewide
- Be furnished in a manner not primarily intended for the convenience of the recipient, the recipient’s caretaker, or the provider

The fact that a provider has prescribed, recommended, or approved medical or allied care, goods, or services does not, in itself, make such care, goods or services medically necessary or a medical necessity or a covered service.

Respondent’s Composite Exhibit 2 at page 23

22. The Florida Medicaid Behavior Analysis Services Coverage Policy (September 2023) (“BA Policy”), incorporated by reference in Fla. Admin. Code. R. 59G-4.125, governs BA services available under Florida Medicaid. The BA Policy provides as follows:

1.0 Introduction

Behavior analysis (BA) services are highly structured interventions, strategies, and approaches provided to decrease maladaptive behaviors and increase or reinforce appropriate behaviors.

...

1.4.6 Medically Necessary/Medical Necessity

As defined in Rule 59G-1.010, F.A.C.

...

2.0 Eligible Recipient

...

2.2 Who Can Receive

Florida Medicaid recipients under the age of 21 years requiring BA services that are medically necessary to address behavior that impairs a recipient’s ability to perform a major life activity. Such functional impairment is expressed through the following behaviors:

- Safety – aggression, self-injury, property destruction, elopement
- Communication – problems with expressive/receptive language, poor understanding or use of non-verbal communications, stereotyped, repetitive language
- Self-stimulating – abnormal, inflexible, or intense preoccupations
- Self-care – difficulty recognizing risks or danger, grooming, eating, or toileting

- Other behaviors not identified above but not limited to complexity of treatment, programming, or environmental variables

The recipient must be referred by an independent physician or practitioner qualified to assess and diagnose disorders related to functional impairment, including:

- Primary care physician with family practice, internal medicine, or pediatric specialty
- Board certified or board eligible physician with specialty in developmental behavioral pediatrics, neurodevelopmental pediatrics, pediatric neurology, adult or child psychiatry
- Child psychologist

The referral must include a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation (CDE) performed according to national evidence-based practice standards. CDEs may be performed by a multidisciplinary team or individual practitioner. In either case, the CDE must be led by a licensed practitioner working within their scope of practice. The CDE must include assessment findings and treatment recommendations appropriate to the recipient. For example, the CDE may include data from behavioral reports by parents, guardians, and/or teachers; diagnostic testing related to recipients' development, behavior, hearing, and/or vision; genetic testing; and/or other neurological and/or medical testing.

Some services may be subject to additional coverage criteria as specified in section 4.0.

...

4.0 Coverage Information

4.1 General Criteria

Florida Medicaid covers services that meet all of the following:

- Are determined medically necessary
- Do not duplicate another service
- Meet the criteria as specified in this policy

4.2 Specific Criteria

Florida Medicaid covers the following BA services in accordance with the applicable Florida Medicaid fee schedule(s), or as specified in this policy:

4.2.1 Behavior Assessment and Behavior Plan

A behavior assessment must be conducted prior to the initiation of behavior analysis interventions. The assessment must identify behavioral deficits that interfere with a major life activity including the events and subsequent interactions that elicit and sustain targeted behavior.

The initial assessment must include the administration, scoring, and reporting of two core standardized behavior instruments, as follows:

- Vineland-3 Comprehensive Parent Interview Form Including Maladaptive Behavior Domain, for all recipients
- Behavior Assessment System for Children, Third Edition, Parenting Relationship Questionnaire (BASC-3 PRQ), for all recipients 2 years old and less than 19 years old

The complete scoring report, including outcome measure scores, must be submitted with service prior authorization requests. Additional assessment tools may be used at the Lead Analyst's discretion.

The behavior plan identifies intervention strategies that are likely to eliminate, mitigate or replace the behavior to produce change sufficient to reengage the recipient in the major life activity. The plan must include specific behavior goal(s), intervention strategies for each goal, anticipated timeframes that are of sufficient duration to address the targeted behavior, and how the ongoing progress of intervention strategies will be reported.

The behavior plan must reflect the requested authorization period (up to six months).

A reassessment and updated behavior plan to renew prior authorization for continued services must be completed at least every six months. The core instruments must be included with reassessments every 12 months.

More frequent assessments must be conducted when:

- New behavior emerges that interferes with a recipient's participation in a major life activity
- Additional BA services are medically necessary and are likely to address the emergent behavior

A full reassessment may be requested if there is a change in provider; however, a change of a practitioner status (e.g., an RBT becoming certified as a BCaBA) is not grounds for conducting a reassessment or updating a behavior plan.

4.2.2 Behavior Analysis Interventions

Florida Medicaid covers up to 40 hours per week of BA intervention services as indicated in the recipient's prior-authorized behavior plan. These services must be delivered to reduce maladaptive behaviors and assist the recipient reach the best possible function level for that individual. Services include:

- Adaptive behavior treatment by protocol - behavior analysis services provided according to the authorized treatment protocol
 - Services may be provided by Lead Analyst, BCaBA, or RBT

- Adaptive behavior treatment with protocol modification – behavior analysis services provided with modifications to the authorized treatment protocol to address behavior and/or response changes or progress
 - o Services may be provided by Lead Analyst or BCaBA
- Group adaptive behavior treatment by protocol – behavior analysis services provided in a group setting according to the authorized treatment protocol
 - o Maximum group size is six recipients
 - o Services may be provided by Lead Analyst, BCaBA, or RBT
- Group adaptive behavior treatment with protocol modification – behavior analysis services provided in a group setting with modifications to the authorized treatment protocol to address behavior and/or response changes or progress
 - o Maximum group size is six recipients
 - o Services may be provided by Lead Analyst or BCaBA
- Family adaptive behavior treatment guidance – parent, guardian, and/or caregiver training on the implementation of the behavior plan and intervention strategies
 - o The recipient may or may not be present depending upon clinical appropriateness.
 - o Services may be provided by Lead Analyst or BCaBA
 - o The Lead Analyst may provide up to two hours per week of training to parents or guardians via telemedicine in accordance with Rule 59G-1.057, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)

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4.2.4 Discharge

Recipients receiving Florida Medicaid BA services who meet one or more of the following will be considered for discharge from services:

- The recipient is no longer eligible for BA services as outlined in the Florida Medicaid Behavior Analysis Services Coverage Policy, incorporated by reference in Rule 59G-4.125, F.A.C.
- The recipient no longer meets medical necessity criteria as defined in Rule 59G-1.010, F.A.C.
- The recipient no longer engages in maladaptive behaviors.
- Data indicates the frequency and severity of maladaptive behavior(s) or level functional impairment no longer poses a barrier to the recipient's ability to function in his/her environment.
- The level of functional impairment as expressed through behaviors no longer justifies continued BA services.
- Parent or guardian withdraws consent for treatment

4.3 Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment

As required by federal law, Florida Medicaid provides services to eligible recipients under the age of 21 years, if such services are medically necessary to correct or ameliorate a defect, a condition, or a physical or mental illness. Included are

diagnostic services, treatment, equipment, supplies, and other measures described in sectioned 1905(a) of the Social Security Act, codified in Title 42 of the United States Code 1396d(a). As such, services for recipients under the age of 21 years exceeding the coverage described within this policy or the associated fee schedule may be approved, if medically necessary. For more information, please refer to Florida Medicaid's Authorization Requirements Policy.

...

5.0 Exclusion

5.1 General Non-Covered Criteria

Services related to this policy are not covered when any of the following apply:

- The service does not meet the medical necessity criteria listed in section 1.0
- The recipient does not meet the eligibility requirements listed in section 2.0
- The service unnecessarily duplicates another provider's service

5.2 Specific Non-Covered Criteria

Florida Medicaid does not cover the following as part of this service benefit:

- Any procedure or physical crisis management technique that involves the use of seclusion or manual, technical, or chemical restraint utilized to control behaviors
- Services for the delivery of recipient supervision, personal care assistance (e.g., acting as a 1:1 aid), companion, chaperone, or shadow regardless of activity or setting. This may include supports and services that are reimbursed through a different Florida Medicaid service benefit or are able to be provided by individuals without professional skills or training.
- Caregiver or childcare services
- Psychological testing, neuropsychology, psychotherapy, cognitive therapy, sex therapy, psychoanalysis, hypnotherapy, or long-term counseling
- Services funded under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Services not listed on the fee schedule
- Services on the same day as behavioral health overlay services*
- Services on the same day as therapeutic behavioral on-site services*
- Services on the same day as therapeutic group care services*
- Services provided simultaneously by more than one BA provider, unless determined to be medically necessary, prior authorized, and indicated in the approved behavior plan
- Travel Time

* These services include behavior analysis treatment.

Florida Medicaid may cover some services listed in this section through a different service benefit.

6.0 Documentation

6.2 Specific Criteria

Providers must maintain the following documentation in the recipient's file:

6.2.1 Referral Information

Original referral documentation must be maintained in the recipient's medical record.

6.2.2 Behavior Assessment and Behavior Plan

The behavior assessment and behavior plan must be signed by the Lead Analyst and the recipient's parent or guardian. Each behavior assessment and behavior plan must include:

- Patient information
- Reason for referral
- Medical and developmental history, including medications prescribed to ameliorate behaviors
- Relevant family history
- Clinical interview
- Review of recent assessments/reports (file review)
- Assessment procedures and results
- Behavior plan
 - o Treatment setting(s)
 - o Proposed treatment targets, goals, and objectives related to medically necessary behavioral interventions
 - o For each:
 - Definition in observable, measurable terms
 - Direct observation and measurement procedures
 - Current level (baseline)
 - Behavior reduction or acquisition procedures
 - Condition(s) under which behavior is to be demonstrated and mastery criteria
 - Date of introduction
 - Estimated date of mastery
 - Plan for generalization
 - Timely reporting of progress, including statements as to whether goal or objective is met; not met; or, modified (with explanation)
- Parent/guardian/caregiver training
 - o Proposed targets, goals, and objectives (as above)
 - o Training procedures
 - o Date of introduction
 - o Estimated date of mastery
- Number of units requested
 - o Number of units for each billing code
 - o Medical necessity for units requested
- Supervision plan, including name(s) of authorized supervisor(s)

- Care coordination with parents/caregivers, schools, state disability programs, and others as applicable
- Transition (fading) plan
- Crisis management plan
- Discharge plan

6.2.3 Assessment and Behavior Plan for Reauthorization and Continuation of Services

In addition to the documentation requirements indicated in 6.2.2, subsequent assessments and behavior plans for reauthorization and continuation of services must include:

- Data reflecting progress of all behaviors targeted for improvement. Each behavior under treatment must have its own data table and corresponding graph.
- A narrative discussion of progress and a statement of justification for continuation of care at the intensity level requested

If significant clinical progress is not made over the course of an authorized period, the provider must explain why clinically significant progress was not made and treatment changes to promote progress.

...

Pages 1 – 8 of BA Policy.

23. The Florida Medicaid Authorization Requirements Policy (“Authorization Policy”), incorporated by reference in Fla. Admin. Code R. 59G-1.053, provides as follows:

3.2.1 Continued Authorization Request

The QIO shall not deny or reduce the amount, frequency, or duration of a service that is already being provided, unless:

- The reduction is to correct for factual error or omissions in prior certifications.
- There is a documented improvement in the recipient’s medical condition.
- There is a documented change in the recipient’s circumstances.
- The reviewing physician determines the recipient will not gain any additional benefit by continuing services at the current level.

...

Page 3 of Authorization Policy.

24. In this case, Respondent denied part of Petitioner’s BA services request. The NOO and NRD explained that Petitioner’s request for services did not meet medical necessity as the

requested services were not “Individualized, specific, and consistent with symptoms or confirmed diagnosis of the illness under treatment, and not in excess of the patient’s needs.” See supra ¶ 4-5.

25. As provided in the BA policy and the EPSDT requirements, the recipient must meet the medical necessity criteria as outlined in Fla. Admin. Code R. 59G-1.010. A component of medical necessity is that services must be “Individualized, specific, and consistent with symptoms or confirmed diagnosis of the illness under treatment, and not in excess of the patient’s needs.” As outlined above, Dr. Darling provided credible and persuasive testimony identifying the content of the Treatment Plan (maladaptive behaviors and replacement skill behaviors) and testifying that the plan could be properly implemented at a lower number of hours/units than requested by the provider. For example, as testified to by Dr. Darling, the treatment plan listed 5 maladaptive behaviors and 10 replacement skill behaviors. All of the reviewers, one at the master’s level and three at the doctoral level each agreed that the treatment plan could be properly implemented at hours lower than those requested by the provider. Thus, the authorization request was reduced by five hours. The remaining requested hours were approved by the reviewers. See supra ¶ 7, 9, 10. Thus, Respondent demonstrated that, based on the information in the record and the evidence presented, the requested BA services by the provider would be in excess of the patient’s needs. Because the services would be in excess of the patient’s needs, a critical element of medical necessity is not met. See supra ¶ 6.

26. In this case, Petitioner’s provider recommended the continuation of BA services. However, the fact that a provider has prescribed, recommended, or approved medical or allied

care, goods, or services does not, in itself, make such care, goods or services medically necessary or a medical necessity or a covered service. See supra ¶ 21.

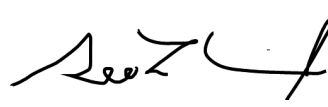
27. Accordingly, Respondent has established by a preponderance of the evidence that the requested BA services are not medically necessary. Looking at all the evidence relevant to the particular needs of Petitioner, the BA services at issue are not necessary to correct or ameliorate a defect or a physical and mental illness or condition.

28. Upon consideration of the testimony provided, Respondent's Composite Exhibit 1, Respondent's Composite Exhibit 2, and the applicable law and policies, the undersigned finds that Respondent proved by a preponderance of the evidence that Respondent's partial denial of BA services was correct.

DECISION

Respondent's denial of Behavior Analysis services is **AFFIRMED**. Petitioner's appeal based on Respondent's denial of Behavior Analysis services is **DENIED**.

DONE and **ORDERED** this 5th day of September 2024, in Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida.


George L.
Winslow, Jr.
24-FH1950
2024.09.05
08:19:04 -04'00'

GEORGE WINSLOW, 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:

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

AHCA Medicaid Hearing Unit
MedicaidHearingUnit@ahca.myflorida.com