



STATE OF WISCONSIN  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

In the Matter of

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
*Redact*  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

DECISION

MPA/164311

**PRELIMINARY RECITALS**

Pursuant to a petition filed February 24, 2015, under Wis. Stat. § 49.45(5), and Wis. Admin. Code § HA 3.03(1), to review a decision by the Division of Health Care Access and Accountability in regard to Medical Assistance, a hearing was held on April 21, 2015, at Wausau, Wisconsin.

The issue for determination is whether the Department erred in its denial of the PA # [Redacted] for speech therapy.

There appeared at that time and place the following persons:

**PARTIES IN INTEREST:**

Petitioner:

[Redacted]  
[Redacted]  
*Redact*  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Respondent:

Department of Health Services  
1 West Wilson Street, Room 651  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

By: [Redacted], OTR (in writing)  
Division of Health Care Access and Accountability  
1 West Wilson Street, Room 272  
P.O. Box 309  
Madison, WI 53707-0309

**ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE:**

John P. Tedesco  
Division of Hearings and Appeals

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Petitioner is a resident of Marathon County. Petitioner is 8 years old and had Down’s Syndrome. She received speech therapy through her IEP at school.

2. On January 19, the provider, Redact, submitted a PA request for 24 weekly sessions of speech therapy.
3. The Department had previously approved a similar PA request for services during the summer.
4. The Department denied the request on February 12, 2015.
5. Petitioner appealed.

### DISCUSSION

Speech and language therapy is an MA-covered service, subject to prior authorization after the first 35 treatment days. Wis. Adm. Code § DHS 107.18(2). In determining whether to approve such a therapy request, the Bureau employs the generic prior authorization criteria found at § DHS 107.02(3)(e). Those criteria include the requirements that a service be medical necessary, appropriate, and an effective use of available services. “Medically necessary” services are those “required to prevent, identify or treat a recipient’s illness, injury, or disability. Wis. Adm. Code § DHS 101.03(96m)(a).

Included in the definition of “medically necessary” at § DHS 101.03(96m)(b) are the requirements that services be of proven medical value or usefulness, that services not be duplicative of other services, and that services be cost effective when compared to alternative services accessible to the recipient. When speech therapy is requested for a school age child in addition to therapy provided by the school system, the request must substantiate the medical necessity of the additional therapy as well as the procedure for coordination of the therapies. Prior Authorization Guidelines Manual, Speech Therapy, page 113.001.02. It is up to the provider to justify the provision of the service. Wis. Adm. Code § DHS 107.02(3)(d)6.

During the fair hearing process, it is generally accepted that the state or county agency, as the party which has taken the action appealed from bears the burden of proof of the propriety of that action. *See State v. Hanson*, 98 Wis.2d 80, 295 N.W.2d 209 (Ct.App.1980). Like most public assistance benefits, however, the initial burden of demonstrating eligibility for any particular benefit or program at the operational stage falls on the applicant, *Gonwa v. Department of Health and Family Services*, 2003 WI App 152, 265 Wis.2d 913, 668 N.W.2d 122 (Ct.App.2003). In other words, it was petitioner’s burden to demonstrate that she qualified for the requested continued speech and language services.

An applicant will need to demonstrate that the procedure for which he or she seeks approval is “medically necessary.” A “medically necessary” service is

[A] medical assistance service under ch. DHS 107 that is:

(a) Required to prevent, identify or treat a recipient’s illness, injury or disability; and

(b) Meets the following standards:

1. Is consistent with the recipient’s symptoms or with prevention, diagnosis or treatment of the recipient’s illness, injury or disability;

\* \* \*

5. Is of proven medical value or usefulness and, consistent with s. HFS 107.035, is not experimental in nature;

6. Is not duplicative with respect to other services being provided to the recipient;

7. Is not solely for the convenience of the recipient, the recipient’s family or a provider;

8. With respect to prior authorization of a service and to other prospective coverage determinations made by the department, is cost-effective compared to an alternative medically necessary service which is reasonably accessible to the recipient; and
9. Is the most appropriate supply or level of service that can safely and effectively be provided to the recipient.

*Wis. Admin. Code* § DHS 101.03(96m). It is also notable that the ForwardHealth program is a public benefit program that provides basic health care. It is not designed to provide the ideal or optimal health services that could benefit an individual.

The crux of the Division's denial of petitioner's request is that the petitioner has not established that private speech and oral function therapy is medically necessary during the school year which is the pertinent period of this PA request.

With regard to the speech therapy, the Department argues that the requested private services are duplicative. Also included in the definition of "medically necessary" at § DHS 101.03(96m) are the requirements that services not be duplicative of other services, and that services be cost effective when compared to alternative services accessible to the recipient. When speech therapy is requested for a school age child in addition to therapy provided by the school system, the request must substantiate the medical necessity of the additional therapy as well as the procedure for coordination of the therapies. Prior Authorization Guidelines Manual, Speech Therapy, page 113.001.03. It is up to the provider to justify the provision of the service. § DHS 107.02(3)(d)6.

Prior hearing decisions have held consistently that where speech therapy is provided in school, it would not be cost effective for MA to cover private therapy. If the private therapy covers a situation that school therapy does not address, it has been found that the services are not duplicative. See, for example, the final Decision in DHA Case No. MPA-48/16180, (Wis. Div. Hearings Appeals, August 21, 1997) where the evidence showed that the petitioner had a unique oral deficiency that the school therapist was not trained to address. Also see the Decision in DHA Case No. MPA-51/41838 (Wis. Div. Hearings Appeals, November 18, 1999), where the school therapist was working on building vocabulary while the private therapist was working on the physical process of vocalizing sounds.

The Department, by then-Deputy Secretary Susan Reinardy held in DHA Final Decision No. MPA-37/80183 (Wis. Div. Hearings Appeals, February 16, 2007) (DHFS), another speech therapy appeal, that "the deciding factor in whether services are duplicative is not the [therapy] technique utilized by the therapists, but the goals and outcomes being addressed by the therapists." *Id.* at 2. It does not matter, for example, if one provider addresses group activities with peers and the other one-on-one activities with an adult. A requested service duplicates "an existing service if the intended outcome of the two services is substantially the same." *Id.* at 3. Her decision specifically rejected additional therapy because the recipient "'needs' more intense services than the school provides."

That holding rests on the principle that "Medicaid may not pay for two services if both services have the same intended outcome or result with respect to the medical condition the services are intended to address." *Id.* at 4. The Department has made it clear that the "intended outcome" test must be read broadly. In DHA Final Decision No MPA-49/82886, a decision reiterating the principle laid down in MPA-37/80183, the Department's then-Deputy Secretary pointed out that the intended outcome was the same if both therapists were working to develop similar functional skills. The unstated rationale underlying the deputy secretary's decision is that federal law requires school districts to meet the special needs of its students and the department will not allow a district's failure to comply with this obligation provide the reason for funding another source of therapy.

Petitioner's mother testified that she wishes to keep the private SLT going because she finds value in being involved and learning techniques that may help her help her child. She finds being present for SLT sessions beneficial and helpful. But, the focus of a PA determination must be on the medical necessity of the service for the member. ForwardHealth is not intended to provide the most ideal, optimal or comprehensive services, but only basic health services. Under the rules and these facts, the Department did not err.

**CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The Department did not err in its denial of the PA request.

**THEREFORE, it is ORDERED**

That this appeal is dismissed.

**REQUEST FOR A REHEARING**

You may request a rehearing if you think this decision is based on a serious mistake in the facts or the law or if you have found new evidence that would change the decision. Your request must be **received within 20 days after the date of this decision**. Late requests cannot be granted.

Send your request for rehearing in writing to the Division of Hearings and Appeals, 5005 University Avenue, Suite 201, Madison, WI 53705-5400 **and** to those identified in this decision as "PARTIES IN INTEREST." Your rehearing request must explain what mistake the Administrative Law Judge made and why it is important or you must describe your new evidence and explain why you did not have it at your first hearing. If your request does not explain these things, it will be denied.

The process for requesting a rehearing may be found at Wis. Stat. § 227.49. A copy of the statutes may be found online or at your local library or courthouse.

**APPEAL TO COURT**

You may also appeal this decision to Circuit Court in the county where you live. Appeals must be filed with the Court **and** served either personally or by certified mail on the Secretary of the Department of Health Services, 1 West Wilson Street, Room 651, Madison, Wisconsin 53703, **and** on those identified in this decision as "PARTIES IN INTEREST" **no more than 30 days after the date of this decision** or 30 days after a denial of a timely rehearing (if you request one).

The process for Circuit Court Appeals may be found at Wis. Stat. §§ 227.52 and 227.53. A copy of the statutes may be found online or at your local library or courthouse.

Given under my hand at the City of Madison,  
Wisconsin, this 30th day of April, 2015

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\sJohn P. Tedesco  
Administrative Law Judge  
Division of Hearings and Appeals



**State of Wisconsin\DIVISION OF HEARINGS AND APPEALS**

Brian Hayes, Administrator  
Suite 201  
5005 University Avenue  
Madison, WI 53705-5400

Telephone: (608) 266-3096  
FAX: (608) 264-9885  
email: [DHAmail@wisconsin.gov](mailto:DHAmail@wisconsin.gov)  
Internet: <http://dha.state.wi.us>

The preceding decision was sent to the following parties on April 30, 2015.

Division of Health Care Access and Accountability