

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL, REGULATIONS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
55 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06105-3725

[REDACTED], 2019
Signature Confirmation

[REDACTED]
Hearing # 131957

NOTICE OF DECISION

PARTY

[REDACTED]

PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

On [REDACTED], 2018, the Department of Social Services (the "Department") sent [REDACTED] (the "Appellant"), a Notice of Action ("NOA") indicating her bill that she submitted for her spenddown could not be used because the document that was provided was not acceptable proof of a medical expense.

On [REDACTED], 2018, the Appellant requested an administrative hearing to contest the Department's action.

On [REDACTED], 2018, the Office of Legal Counsel, Regulations, and Administrative Hearings ("OLCRAH") issued a notice scheduling the administrative hearing for [REDACTED], 2018.

On [REDACTED], 2018, in accordance with sections 17b-60, 17b-61 and 4-176e to 4-189, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes, OLCRAH held an administrative hearing. The following individuals were present at the hearing:

[REDACTED], Appellant's Representative via telephone
Javier Rivera, Department's Representative
Carla Hardy, Hearing Officer

STATEMENTS OF THE ISSUE

The issue is whether the Appellant's medical bill can be applied to reduce her spenddown.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On [REDACTED], 2017, the Appellant purchased hearing aids for \$3,800.00 from [REDACTED]. (Exhibit 9: Invoice, [REDACTED]/17; Exhibit 10: [REDACTED] Purchase Agreement; Representatives Testimony)
2. The hearing aids were purchased using a HealthPlan credit account. (Exhibit 9; Exhibit 11: HealthPlan Credit Account Approval)
3. The Department calculated a \$927.72 spenddown for the period covering [REDACTED] 2018 through [REDACTED] 2019. (Exhibit 14: MAABD Income Test and MA Spenddown Override; Department's Testimony)
4. The Appellant receives Social Security benefits in the amount of \$1,017.00 monthly. (Exhibit 14)
5. The Appellant is a recipient of the Medicare Savings Program ("MSP") which pays for her monthly Medicare B premiums. (Testimony)
6. The Appellant is paying \$300.00 per month on the HealthPlan credit account. (Exhibit 7: Summary of Account Activity, [REDACTED]/18; Exhibit 8: Summary of Account Activity, [REDACTED]/18; Representatives Testimony)
7. On [REDACTED] 2018, Department applied the following medical bills towards the Appellant's [REDACTED] 2018 through [REDACTED] 2019 spenddown.

Date of Service	Provider	Amount
[REDACTED]/18	[REDACTED]	\$91.80
[REDACTED]/18 - [REDACTED]/18	[REDACTED]	180.00
Total		271.80

(Exhibit 1: Case Notes)

8. The Appellant's net spenddown amount was reduced to \$655.92. The Department rejected a summary of account activity document because it appeared to be a contract and not a bill. (Exhibit 1, Exhibit 3: Notice of Unusable Spenddown Expenses, [REDACTED]/18)
9. On [REDACTED] 2018, the Department applied the following medical bill towards the Appellant's spenddown:

Date of Service	Provider	Amount
█/18	█	\$4.95
Total		\$4.95

(Exhibit 1)

10. The Appellant's net spenddown amount was reduced to \$650.97. The Department rejected the Details of Your Plans because it appeared that the document was a purchase/loan document. (Exhibit 1)
11. On █, 2018, the Department rejected a summary of account activity. The verification was deemed unacceptable because it was not an actual bill. (Exhibit 1: Exhibit 5: Notice of Unusable Spenddown Expense, █/18)
12. On █ 2018, the Department applied the following bill toward the Appellant's spenddown:

Date of Service	Provider	Amount
█/18 & █/18	█	\$5.85
Total		\$5.85

(Exhibit 1)

13. The Appellant's spenddown was reduced to \$650.09. The Department rejected the Appellant's hearing aid expense. The Department determined that it was paid in a prior period. (Exhibit 1)
14. The █ bills dated █ 2018 for \$4.95 and █ and █ 2018 for \$5.85 are not listed on the MA-Spenddown Override-Details which catalogues which bills were used and which bills were not used to activate a spenddown. (Exhibit 2: MA-Spenddown-Override-Details)
15. On █ 2018, the Department sent the Appellant a notice advising her that the bills submitted could not be used toward meeting her spenddown. The bills included \$527.00 for a health insurance premium and \$300.00 for hearing aids. (Exhibit 6: Notice un Unusable Spenddown Expenses)
16. The Appellant did not submit a \$527.00 health insurance bill for the spenddown. (Representative's Testimony)
17. The Appellant's Representative was previously informed by the Department that the \$3,800.00 bill for the Appellant's hearing aids was used to activate her spenddown in █ 2017. (Representative's Testimony)
18. The Department does not know if the cost of the Appellant's hearing aids were used for the previous spenddown periods. (Department's Testimony)

19. The issuance of this decision is timely under Connecticut General Statutes 17b-61(a), which requires that a decision be issued within 90 days of the request for an administrative hearing. The Appellant requested an administrative hearing on [REDACTED] 2018. Therefore, this decision is due not later than [REDACTED], 2019.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Section 17b-2 of the Connecticut General Statutes authorizes the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services to administer the Medicaid program.
2. Uniform Policy Manual ("UPM") § 2540.01(A) provides that in order to qualify for medical assistance, an individual just meet the conditions of at least one coverage group.
3. UPM § 5500.01 provides that a needs group is the group of persons comprising the assistance unit and certain other persons whose basic needs are added to the total needs of the assistance unit members when determining the income eligibility of the assistance unit.
4. UPM § 5515.05(C)(2) (a)(b) provides in part that the needs group for Medical Assistance for the Aged, Blind and Disabled ("MAABD") unit includes the applicant or recipient and the spouse of the applicant or recipient when they share the same home regardless of whether one or both are applying for or receiving assistance, except in cases involving working individuals with disabilities.
5. UPM § 2015.05(A) provides that the assistance unit in Assistance to the Aged, Blind or Disabled ("AABD") and MAABD consists of only one member. In these programs, each individual is a separate assistance unit.
6. The Department correctly determined that the Appellant is in a needs group of one persons and an assistance unit of one member.
7. UPM § 5050.13(A)(1) provides that income from Social Security is treated as unearned income for all programs.
8. The Department correctly determined the Appellant's total gross monthly income equals \$1,017.00.
9. UPM § 5050.13(A)(2) provides that Social Security income is subject to unearned income disregards in the Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled ("AABD") and Medicaid for the Aid to the Aged, Blind, and Disabled ("MAABD") programs.

10. UPM § 5030.15(A) provides that except as provided in section 5030.15 D., unearned income disregards are subtracted from the unit member's total gross monthly unearned income.
11. UPM § 5030.15(B)(1)(a) provides that the standard disregard is \$227.00 for those individuals who reside in their own homes in the community or who live as roomers in the homes of others and those who reside in long term care facilities, shelters for the homeless or battered women shelters. Effective January 1, 2008, and each January 1st thereafter, this disregard shall be increased to reflect the annual cost of living adjustment used by the Social Security Administration. The current disregard is \$339.00 for those individuals who reside in their own homes in the community.
12. The Department correctly determined the Appellant eligible for the \$339.00 standard disregard.
13. The Department was correct when it determined that the appellant's applied unearned income was \$678.00 ($\$1,017.00 - \$339.00 = \678.00)
14. UPM § 5045.10(E) provides that the assistance unit's total applied income is the sum of the units applied earnings, applied unearned income and the amount deemed.
15. The Department correctly calculated the Appellant's total applied unearned income equaled \$678.00.
16. UPM § 5520.20(B)(1) provides that a six month period for which eligibility will be determined is established to include the month of application and the five consecutive calendar months which follow.
17. The Department correctly calculated the Appellant's six month period of eligibility as [REDACTED] 2018, through [REDACTED] 2019.
18. UPM § 4530.15(A) pertains to the medical assistance standards. It provides that a uniform set of income standards is established for all assistance units who do not qualify as categorically needy. It further states that the Medically Needy Income Limit ("MNIL") of an assistance unit varies according to the size of the assistance unit and the region of the state in which the assistance unit resides.
19. UPM § 4530.15(B) provides that the MNIL is the amount equivalent to 143 percent of the benefit amount that ordinarily would be paid under the AFDC program to an assistance unit of the same size with no income for the appropriate region of residence.

20. UPM § 4510.10(B) provides that [REDACTED] is part of [REDACTED]
21. The Department correctly determined that the Appellant resides in [REDACTED]
22. The monthly Temporary Family Assistance grant for one person residing in [REDACTED] is \$366.00.
23. The MNIL for one person residing in region B is \$696.41 ($\$366.00 \times 143\% = \523.38).
24. The Department correctly determined that the MNIL for a needs group of one is \$523.38.
25. UPM § 5520.25(B) provides that when the amount of the assistance unit's monthly income exceeds the MNIL, income eligibility for the medically needy assistance unit does not occur until the amount of excess income is offset by medical expenses. This process of offsetting is referred to as a spend-down.
26. The Appellant's applied income exceeds the MNIL by \$154.62 ($\678.00 applied income - $\$523.38$ MNIL = $\$154.62$)
27. The Department correctly determined that during the six month period from [REDACTED] 2018 through [REDACTED] 2019, the Appellant's applied income exceeds the MNIL by \$927.72 ($\$154.62 \times 6 = \927.72)
28. UPM § 5520.25(B) provides for the use of medical expenses under a spend-down.
1. Medical expenses are used for a spend-down if they meet the following conditions:
 - a. the expenses must be incurred by a person whose income is used to determine eligibility;
 - b. any portion of an expense used for a spend-down must not be payable through third party coverage unless the third party is a public assistance program totally financed by the State of Connecticut or by a political subdivision of the State;
 - c. there must be current liability for the incurred expenses, either directly to the provider(s) or to a lender for a loan used to pay the provider(s), on the part of the needs group members;
 - d. the expenses may not have been used for a previous spend-down in which their use resulted in eligibility for the assistance unit.
 2. The unpaid principal balance which occurs or exists during the spend-down period for loans used to pay for medical expense incurred before or during the spend-down period, is used provided that:
 - a. the loan proceeds were actually paid to the provider; and

- b. the provider charges that were paid with the loan proceeds have not been applied against the spend-down liability; and
 - c. the unpaid principal balance was not previously applied against spend-down liability, resulting in eligibility being achieved.
3. Medicaid expenses are used in the following order of categories and, within each category, chronologically starting with the oldest bills:
 - a. first, Medicare and other health insurance premiums, deductibles, or coinsurance charges. Medical insurance premium expenses which exist at the time of the processing of the application which are reasonably anticipated to exist for six month prospective period are considered as a six-month projected total;
 - b. then, expenses incurred for necessary medical and remedial services that are recognized under State Law as medical costs but not covered by Medicaid in Connecticut.
 4. When unpaid loan principal balances are used, they are categorized by the type of expense they were used to pay, as in B.3.
 5. Expenses used to determine eligibility in a retroactive period are used in the following order:
 - a. unpaid expenses incurred anytime prior to the three-month retroactive period; then
 - b. paid or unpaid expenses incurred within the three-month retroactive period but not later than the end of the retroactive month being considered; then
 - c. an unpaid principal balance of a loan which exists during the retroactive period.
 6. Expenses used to determine eligibility in the prospective period are used in the categorical and chronological order described previously.
 7. Income eligibility for the assistance unit exists as of the day when excess Income is totally offset by medical expenses:
 - a. Any portion of medical expenses used to offset the excess income are the responsibility of the unit to pay.
 - b. Medical expenses which are recognized as payable under the State's plan and which are remained unpaid at the time eligibility begins are paid by the Department provided the expenses were not used to offset income.
29. UPM § 5520.30(B)(3) provides that when the amount of incurred expense is insufficient to offset the excess income, no eligibility exists for that six month period.
30. The Appellant submitted medical bills totaling \$282.60 ($\$271.80 + \$4.95 + \$5.85 = \282.60) for the spenddown period of [REDACTED] 2018 through [REDACTED] 2019.
31. The Appellant submitted proof of payments to her credit account which were determined by the Department to be an unusable expense.

32. The Department has not provided evidence that the credit account payments are unusable expenses.

DISCUSSION

The Appellant has had previous spenddown periods dating back to at least [REDACTED] 2017, the month in which she incurred the bill her hearing aids. She opened a HealthPlan credit account to pay for the \$3,800.00 expense. Policy states that the unpaid balance for loans used to pay for a medical bill may be applied toward the spenddown if it was not applied toward a previous spenddown which resulted in eligibility for the program. It is unknown if that bill or any part of it was used to activate her spenddown in [REDACTED] 2017 or any other spenddown period after that. The Department did not provide evidence that this was the case. Further research by the Department will be necessary.

In addition, it does not appear that the Appellant's spenddown was reduced by the \$4.95 and \$5.85 [REDACTED] bills that she provided.

DECISION

The Appellant's appeal is **GRANTED**.

ORDER

1. The Department shall apply the [REDACTED] bills toward the Appellant's spenddown.
2. The Department shall review the Appellant's HealthPlan payments to verify if any part of that medical expense can be used toward her spenddown.
3. Compliance with this order shall be submitted to the undersigned by [REDACTED], 2019.



Carla Hardy
Hearing Officer

Pc: Tricia Morelli, Department of Social Services, Manchester
Javier Rivera, Department of Social Services, Manchester

RIGHT TO REQUEST RECONSIDERATION

The appellant has the right to file a written reconsideration request within **15** days of the mailing date of the decision on the grounds there was an error of fact or law, new evidence has been discovered or other good cause exists. If the request for reconsideration is granted, the appellant will be notified within 25 days of the request date. No response within 25 days means that the request for reconsideration has been denied. The right to request a reconsideration is based on §4-181a (a) of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Reconsideration requests should include specific grounds for the request: for example, indicate what error of fact or law, what new evidence, or what other good cause exists.

Reconsideration requests should be sent to: Department of Social Services, Director, Office of Administrative Hearings and Appeals, 55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

The appellant has the right to appeal this decision to Superior Court within 45 days of the mailing of this decision, or 45 days after the agency denies a petition for reconsideration of this decision, provided that the petition for reconsideration was filed timely with the Department. The right to appeal is based on §4-183 of the Connecticut General Statutes. To appeal, a petition must be filed at Superior Court. A copy of the petition must be served upon the Office of the Attorney General, 55 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106 or the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, 55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105. A copy of the petition must also be served on all parties to the hearing.

The 45 day appeal period may be extended in certain instances if there is good cause. The extension request must be filed with the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services in writing no later than 90 days from the mailing of the decision. Good cause circumstances are evaluated by the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee in accordance with §17b-61 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The Agency's decision to grant an extension is final and is not subject to review or appeal.

The appeal should be filed with the clerk of the Superior Court in the Judicial District of New Britain or the Judicial District in which the appellant resides.