

Members of the Legislative Audit Committee
Regarding Review of Prior Authorizations for Title 19

To the Members of the Legislative Audit Committee,

Thank you for your interest in the Prior Authorization review process of children receiving Katie Beckett. I am a parent of a four-year old son with special needs who receives benefits from Katie Beckett. Sean, my son, is diagnosed with global dyspraxia, a partial loss of the ability to perform coordinated movements. For Sean, that means that he has to **learn** all movement, nothing happens "automatically". His balance is "iffy", his is uncoordinated and clumsy and it requires applied problem solving to negotiate his environment. His speech is severely impacted by this disorder. A child with apraxia of speech experiences a wide gap between their ability to understand language (which is broadly within normal limits) compared to their expressive speech, which is seriously deficient, absent, or severely unclear. Sean requires speech, occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT). He is also enrolled in the early education system for two mornings a week and receives approximately 30 hours of in-home education through the Wisconsin Early Autism Project (WEAP). Sean has responded very positively to this intense course of intervention. While Sean's disorder is fairly uncommon, those experts who have treated similar children are very impressed with his progress to date.

This year we have come to rely heavily on Katie Beckett due to insurance denying coverage of therapy and Sean's enrollment in the WEAP program (underwritten by Title 19). We cannot express how important the benefits of Katie Beckett have been for Sean and our family. As a direct result of the therapy he has received, Sean is now:

- Negotiating movement through the environment safely, e.g., stepping up onto curbs, climbing stairs without holding on to a banister, etc.
- Improving his ability to drink and swallow safely
- Using augmentative communication devices, e.g., a PECs picture book system and voice output computer
- Working on self-help skills, such as dressing, opening containers, strengthening his hands and fingers
- Demonstrating his knowledge of the alphabet, numbers, shapes, colors, vocabulary, categories, etc.

My experience with the Prior Authorization review process this year has revealed issues with its efficacy and efficiency. Sean's Prior Authorization requests for OT and speech have been denied two to three months after submission. In October, I attended a hearing to review the state's decision to deny speech. I brought my speech therapist, a MS with over twenty years of clinical experience, to present our case. For forty minutes the state's therapist questioned and argued with my therapist her request for services. She seemed uneducated about the complexities of oral motor apraxia, unconcerned about his chewing and swallowing issues and unable to understand the therapy treatment recommended.

She ended the hearing by abdicating her position, leaving it up to the hearing officer to decide the case. The hearing officer's decision was to extend benefits for 13 sessions. We are now going through another Prior Authorization review. I am also currently waiting on a hearing date for an OT prior authorization that was submitted in August. My OT therapist, concerned about the potential expense to be billed to my family, has interrupted services until the hearing decision from the state is received. The net effect is that my son's treatment is disrupted, we are incurring potentially significant expenses due to the state's slow processing of Prior Authorizations, and a great deal of time, expense and effort is being expended by the state, Sean's therapists and myself.

My professional background includes establishing and operating benefits and claims operations for General Motors, Xerox, and MetLife. My experience has taught me that it is quite expensive to set up exhaustive reviews of claims in order to net the four to five percent of the population seeking to abuse benefits. And when considering costs, both the direct expense (payroll and overhead) and indirect expenses (clinician and parental time) add up quickly. Given my personal experience with the state as well as my professional experience in corporate America, I am confident that the Prior Authorization review process should be streamlined and managed under a new paradigm. This new paradigm should more closely resemble a case management model of annual review and planning of all team members. This approach would allow important services to be properly coordinated and adjudicated. It would be constructed to avoid the current micro-management system. The current system is designed to catch seldom-occurring fraud & abuse instead of maximizing current resources.

In closing, Katie Beckett provides essential services that bring significant, positive benefits to many. By streamlining and shifting the paradigm used in the Prior Authorization review, I believe that the program could be even more effective and powerful.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my testimony.