



New Medicare items for psychologists and other allied mental health professionals

Background

From 1 November 2006 new Medicare rebates will be available for patients with a mental disorder to receive up to 12 individual and/or group allied mental health services per calendar year. These will be provided in two sets of six services with a review by the referring practitioner after the first six services.

Better Outcomes – Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) consultations are included in the 12-service limit for these items. Allied mental health services that can be provided under this initiative include Psychological Therapy services provided by eligible clinical psychologists, and Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by eligible psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists.

Rebates for these services are available to patients with a mental disorder who have been referred by a medical practitioner managing the patient under a GP Mental Health Care Plan, and/or a psychiatrist assessment and management plan; or on referral by a psychiatrist or paediatrician.

Overview of the changes

There are 20 new MBS items for allied mental health services provided on referral by a GP, psychiatrist, or paediatrician:

- **Items 80000, 80005, 80010 and 80015:** Individual Psychological Therapy services provided by a clinical psychologist
- **Item 80020:** Group Psychological Therapy services provided by a clinical psychologist
- **Items 80100, 80105, 80110 and 80115:** Individual Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by a psychologist
- **Item 80120:** Group Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by a psychologist
- **Items 80125, 80130, 80135 and 80140:** Individual Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by an occupational therapist
- **Item 80145:** Group Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by an occupational therapist
- **Items 80150, 80155, 80160 and 80165:** Individual Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by a social worker
- **Item 80170:** Group Focussed Psychological Strategies services provided by a social worker

Eligible allied health professionals may use only the items relevant to their discipline. For example, an occupational therapist may only use items 80125, 80130, 80135, 80140 and 80145. Allied health professionals may set their own fees. However, for each item, there is a set Medicare rebate.



Registration with Medicare Australia

Allied mental health professionals must be registered with Medicare Australia to be eligible to provide services under this initiative. To register, an allied health professional must be:

- A clinical psychologist with eligibility for membership of the Australian Psychological Society's College of Clinical Psychologists, and registered with the Psychologists Registration Board in the state or territory in which they are practising (Clinical psychologists whose state/territory registration includes any limitation are not eligible to register with Medicare Australia to provide Psychological Therapy services under this initiative);
- A psychologist registered with the Psychologists Registration Board in the state or territory in which they are practising (Psychologists whose state/territory registration includes any limitation are not eligible to register with Medicare Australia to provide Focussed Psychological Strategies under this initiative);
- A full- or part-time member of OT AUSTRALIA with a minimum of two years' full time experience in mental health who abides by *The Australian Competency Standards for Occupational Therapists in Mental Health*; or
- A member of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), including certification by the AASW as meeting the standards for mental health set out in the AASW's *Standards for Mental Health Social Workers 1999*.

Information about registering with Medicare Australia to provide allied mental health services under this initiative is available from the Medicare Australia provider inquiry line on 132 150.

Exceptional circumstances

In exceptional circumstances, patients may receive an additional six individual services above those already provided (to a maximum of 18 services per patient per calendar year). Exceptional circumstances apply when there has been a change in the patient's clinical condition or care circumstances and must be authorised by the referring medical practitioner.

Reporting requirements

Allied health professionals must provide a written report to the referring medical practitioner following the first six services and/or on completion of the course of treatment. The written report should include information on:

- any assessments carried out on the patient;
- any treatment provided; and
- recommendations on future management of the patient's disorder.

Note: Before a rebate can be paid for the allied mental health service provided on referral from a medical practitioner, psychiatrist or paediatrician, either the patient must have already claimed a rebate, or the medical practitioner, psychiatrist or paediatrician must have already lodged a claim for direct payment from Medicare for the relevant GP Mental Health Care Plan item or referral item.