



Australian Government

Department of Health and Ageing

FACT SHEET NUMBER 2

Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Better Access) initiative

IMPLEMENTATION OF MENTAL HEALTH SKILLS TRAINING FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS: 2009-10 BUDGET MEASURE – NEW MEDICARE ITEM

Budget measure description

The 2009-10 Federal Budget included the introduction of a new Medicare item for GPs who have not completed accredited Mental Health Skills Training from 1 January 2010.

An outline of the Budget measure and a definition of Mental Health Skills Training was provided in the previous fact sheet circulated in early October 2009, which can be found at: www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-ba-train

What is the new MBS item for GPs who have not completed Mental Health Skills Training?

As of 1 January 2010, a new Medicare item (2702) will be introduced for GPs who have not completed accredited Mental Health Skills Training, with a schedule fee of \$125.95 for developing a Mental Health Treatment Plan.

GPs who have completed Mental Health Skills Training accredited by the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration (GPMHSC) will continue to be able to access item 2710, with a current schedule fee of \$160.45 for developing a Mental Health Treatment Plan.

What are the requirements for new item 2702?

The requirements for new item 2702 are the same as for item 2710. In developing a Mental Health Treatment Plan under either item number 2710 or 2702, GPs are required to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the patient's mental health needs, and record that assessment and diagnosis in the Plan.

In order to claim the above items GPs must undertake this assessment of their patient and develop the Plan themselves, in consultation with the patient.

How will Medicare Australia know which item number I can claim?

By 11 December 2009, the GPMHSC will provide Medicare Australia with a list of those GPs who have completed the requisite training and are therefore eligible to access the higher schedule fee. Those GPs who are not on this list will only be able to access the new item 2702 with a lower schedule fee.

After that time, the GPMHSC will continue to advise Medicare Australia on a regular basis the names of GPs who have completed accredited Mental Health Skills Training.

IMPORTANT:

The GPMHSC will provide GP contact details including e-mail address and/or postal address to Medicare Australia to expedite the registration process and allow them to inform GPs of their eligibility to claim MBS item 2710. GPs who do not wish for this information to be provided to Medicare Australia must contact the GPMHSC before 11 December 2009.

After I have completed the training, how quickly can I use the 2710 item?

The GPMHSC will provide information to Medicare Australia that a GP has completed Mental Health Skills Training. Medicare Australia will then record the date the training was completed as the effective date advised by the GPMHSC. Medicare Australia will notify the GP of the effective date soon after receiving this date from the GPMHSC.

Please note there will be a time lag from when a GP's completion of training has been provided to the GPMHSC and reported to Medicare Australia – this may be anywhere from two to six weeks.

A GP who has completed the relevant training should hold accounts for item 2710 until they receive the confirmation of eligibility from Medicare Australia, and can then submit these claims to Medicare.

What if I claim the wrong item number?

If a GP who is not registered with Medicare Australia as having completed the training claims an item 2710, Medicare Australia will reject the claim. The Medicare system will **not** automatically default to a 2702 item.

If a patient takes a claim for a 2710 to Medicare Australia for reimbursement, and the GP who prepared the Plan is not registered with Medicare Australia as having completed Mental Health Skills Training, the Medicare system will not allow this to be processed. The patient will be required to return to the practice and have the correct invoice issued for a 2702 item and return to Medicare to process this new claim.

How can I confirm that I am registered as having completed Mental Health Skills Training?

If you are unsure whether you have completed Mental Health Skills Training, you should contact the GPMHSC to check whether you have done so on (03) 8699 0554/0556 or at gpmhsc@racgp.org.au.

If I am yet to complete Mental Health Skills Training, how can I find out what courses are available in my area?

There are a number of ways to find available Mental Health Skills Training courses. You could visit the GPMHSC's find training page at www.gpmhsc.org.au, or contact the GPMHSC on (03) 8699 0554/0556 or your College or local Division of General Practice.

GPs are encouraged to complete their Mental Health Skills Training as soon as possible.

Please note that some providers of online courses may be closing down for the Christmas period, which may impact on the availability of help desk support staff to assist GPs with their online training requirements during this time. Please check with your preferred provider the availability of support for online courses during December.

What if I have already completed Mental Health Skills Training?

If you have completed a GPMHSC accredited Mental Health Skills Training course since 1 July 2001 (previously known as level 1 mental health skills training) and your attendance at this course has been registered with the GPMHSC, you do not need to do this training again to qualify for the higher schedule fee. However, continuing professional development (CPD) in mental health skills training is strongly encouraged, and the GPMHSC recommends six hours of mental health CPD each triennium.

If you are unsure whether you have completed Mental Health Skills Training, you should contact the GPMHSC to check whether you have done so on (03) 8699 0554/0556 or at gpmhsc@racgp.org.au.

What if I have not completed Mental Health Skills Training but consider I have obtained requisite skills through other training pathways?

Any GP who has completed accredited Mental Health Skills Training since 1 July 2001 will not be required to do so again to continue to access the higher schedule fee. However, in addition to completing this Mental Health Skills Training, all GPs are encouraged to further maintain their competencies by undertaking CPD in mental health.

Any GP who considers that they have gained the requisite mental health skills listed for Mental Health Skills Training through other training pathways, including tertiary qualifications, may make an individual application to the GPMHSC for Mental Health Skills Training accreditation. You should contact the GPMHSC on (03) 8699 0554/0556 or at gpmhsc@racgp.org.au to discuss an application.

If on reading this fact sheet you have any further queries, please contact Bernadette Blenkiron in the Department of Health and Ageing on (02) 6289 8826 or at: bernadette.blenkiron@health.gov.au

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