



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

FACT SHEET

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

CHANGES TO REBATES FOR GP MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT PLAN MEDICARE ITEMS: 2011-12 BUDGET MEASURE

Key Points:

GPs will be paid for the actual time they spend on developing a Mental Health Treatment Plan, plus an incentive for special training to maintain the high quality of care provided.

This 2011-12 Budget measure will commence from 1 November 2011.

From 1 November 2011, for GPs who have completed Mental Health Skills training, the rebate for a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan consultation of between 20 and 39 minutes will be \$85.92 and the rebate for a consultation of 40 minutes and more will be \$126.43.

For GPs who have not completed Mental Health Skills training the rebate for a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan consultation of between 20 and 39 minutes will be \$67.65 and the rebate for a consultation of 40 minutes and more would be \$99.55.

There will also be changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule fee structure for the GP Mental Health Review item 2712 and the GP Mental Health Consultation item 2713. From 1 November 2011, the rebate for both items 2712 and 2713 will be \$67.65.

Savings generated from these changes are being reinvested in additional mental health services for particularly vulnerable and hard to reach groups, who continue to miss out – through the Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) program, additional childhood and early intervention youth services and improving the coordination and accessibility of services for individuals with severe mental illness.

Implementation of this 2011-12 Budget measure:

The Department is working on implementation arrangements and further information on the new fee structure and item numbers will be distributed to GPs closer to the 1 November 2011 implementation date.

Background to the Budget Measure

The Government is delivering on its commitment to make mental health a second term priority, with a major investment to reform the mental health system totalling \$2.2 billion over the next five years – including \$1.5 billion in new measures in the 2011-12 Budget.

The reforms will be focused on delivering the services that have the best chance of improving the lives of thousands of Australians suffering from mental illnesses, now and into the future, by:

- providing more intensive support services, and better co-ordinating those services, for people with severe illness;
- targeting support to areas and communities that need it most, such as Indigenous communities and socioeconomically disadvantaged areas that are underserved currently; and
- helping to detect potential mental health problems in the early years, and supporting young people.

In the case of the changes made to the Better Access program through the Budget, the Government took the advice of leading experts and weighed up the available evidence, including from the Better Access evaluation and other available data about how the program is being used by providers and consumers alike.

This change is based on solid evidence that the current untimed rebate provided for the development of Mental Health Treatment Plans does not reflect the actual time being taken by GPs to prepare these plans. Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) and Medicare data that shows that:

- the median consultation length for a GP treatment plan was 28 minutes;
- over 80 per cent of plans were being completed in less than 40 minutes;
- over 90 per cent in less than 45 minutes; and
- 18.5 per cent were being completed in less than 20 minutes.

The time-tied rebates are consistent with most other time based items and give billing options to GPs based on how long they need to spend with a patient developing a plan.

The Government values the role GPs play in primary mental health care and is committed to ensuring that high quality mental health services are being delivered. The three quarters of GPs who have completed this training will continue to access higher rebates.

The Government doesn't take the decision to make changes to Medicare services lightly, but given the tight fiscal environment we have a responsibility to ensure that our investments are appropriately targeted to ensure maximum value.

Further information

For more information please visit: www.health.gov.au/mentalhealth

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