

# Information Sheet

## Medicare Benefits

Reviewed March 2014

- **The Chronic Disease Management Plan**
- **The Better Access to Mental Health Plan**
- **The Helping Children with Autism Access to Diagnosis and Treatment**

Medicare is a national body that subsidises primary health care in Australia. Generally, Medicare provides a rebate on the cost of seeing a doctor, but doctors can write special plans that mean you can claim a Medicare rebate for seeing other kinds of health professionals, like therapists. Some of the most relevant plans to people with ASD are listed on this information sheet.

For the most part, Medicare will only refund a limited portion of the overall cost of service and this will usually leave you with a gap that you need to pay yourself. If you end up paying a lot for medical services in one year, you may reach the Medicare Safety Net. Reaching the Medicare Safety Net means you get a higher rebate for Medicare-subsidised services.

Individuals will be notified by Medicare when they approach the safety net, but families will need to register with Medicare so that Medicare knows to tally their medical expenses together. For more information, call Medicare on 13 20 11 or read about it at

[www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au).



### Chronic Disease Management Plan

*Previously called an Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) plan*

The Chronic Disease Management (CDM) Plan provides:

- 5 sessions with an allied health professional per calendar year (see the list of professionals who are considered allied health professionals).

People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are eligible for the CDM Plan because ASD is a chronic condition.

The CDM Plan can be written by your GP and people with ASDs are eligible for 5 sessions every calendar year. Once the initial plan has been made, the GP will not need to write a new plan each year, but may review the plan.

#### Allied Health Professionals

- Aboriginal Health Workers
- Audiologists
- Chiropractors
- Diabetes Educators
- Dietitians
- Exercise Physiologists
- Mental Health Nurses
- Occupational Therapists
- Osteopaths
- Physiotherapists
- Podiatrists
- Psychologists
- Speech Pathologists

### Better Access to Mental Health Plan

*Also known as Mental Health Care Plan*

This plan provides:

- 6 sessions of individual therapy with a psychologist, occupational therapist or social worker.

An additional 4 sessions are available following a review with the GP (a maximum of 10 sessions per calendar year).

- 10 group sessions of therapy with a psychologist, occupational therapist, or social worker.

The Better Access to Mental Health Care plan is an option available for anybody (individuals with an ASD, parents, siblings, carers etc.) who feels that their overall wellbeing and mental health is at risk.

Mental illness is common; around 1 in 5 Australians will experience a mental illness at some stage in their lives. Your mental health can be affected by a number of things; physical problems such as chemical imbalances in the brain, as well as non-physical problems such as exposure to trauma, family environments, cumulative stress and difficult life events.

We know that having a child with an ASD can be difficult. Any members of the family who are feeling sad, confused, depressed or anxious about the person in the family who has Autism Spectrum Disorder should see their GP to discuss other professionals who may be able to support them, such as social workers or counsellors.

People who have ASDs can also have mental health difficulties. They may be anxious about the environments around them; they may be depressed because they are having difficulty forming relationships with other people. There are many reasons why they would be eligible to access the Better Access to Mental Health Care Plan, and they should be encouraged to seek support from the appropriate professionals.

Group sessions can be used for social skills groups, play therapy groups, anxiety groups, or any group that



is run by the above listed professionals and is working towards building the confidence, self esteem and ability of the person with ASD.

People are eligible for up to 10 sessions under the Better Access to Mental Health plan every calendar year. You can get a referral from your GP. Make sure you

book a long consultation with your doctor to allow you and your doctor enough time to prepare a GP Mental Health Care Plan and discuss your treatment options. A psychiatrist or paediatrician can also write this referral.

## The Helping Children with Autism Access to Diagnosis and Treatment Plan

*Sometimes called "Medicare Item 135"*

This provides the following:

- 4 appointments for private diagnosis referred by a paediatrician or psychiatrist to a psychologist, speech pathologists, occupational therapist, audiologist, optometrist, orthoptist or physiotherapist. This is called the 'Helping Children with Autism Increased Access To Diagnosis'
- 20 sessions with a psychologist, speech pathologists, occupational therapist, audiologist, optometrist, orthoptist or physiotherapist. This is called the 'Helping Children With Autism Treatment Plan'

Families have the option of using the Medicare rebate system to help pay for private assessments. The family's paediatrician or psychiatrist can diagnose the child with autism, in collaboration with the allied health professionals listed above. The rebate allows a total of four sessions with these professionals (together not each).

With a diagnosis of ASD, the child will be eligible for 20 sessions of therapy with one of the above listed allied health professionals. Your paediatrician or psychiatrist will develop a treatment plan for your child with you. These rebates can only be used once in the child's life time, they must be written by their 13th birthday, and used by their 15th birthday.

**Not every professional will have experience with and understanding of ASD. You can call Amaze for contact details of professionals who have registered to be on our Directory of Services.**

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. Can I use all these plans at the same time?**

A. Yes!

**Q. Can I use the 20 Sessions plan/Item 135 more than once?**

A. No, your child will receive this plan only once in their lifetime.

**Q. Who can write the referrals?**

A. The Helping Children with Autism/Item 135 referrals need to be written by a paediatrician or psychiatrist. The Better Access to Mental Health referral can also

be written by a paediatrician or psychiatrist, but are more commonly written by a GP. The Chronic Disease Management referrals can only be written by your GP.

**Q. Are these Medicare sessions free of cost?**

A. No – you will receive a rebate from Medicare. This rebate does not cover the total cost of the service. Please check with Medicare the amount you will receive.

**Q. Can an allied health professional who is seeing my child for some or all of the 20 HCWA Medicare sessions also work with my child through the \$12,000 HCWA initiative for early intervention?**

A. If the therapist is on the HCWA approved panel, yes, you may use this therapist. If the therapist is not on the approved panel, you will need to find a service provider that is approved for \$12,000 funding if you want to use this funding.



©2014 Amaze (formerly Autism Victoria). Permission is granted for the content of this information sheet to be reproduced in its entirety, provided Amaze is acknowledged as the source and the website address is given.

<i>The Medicare Plans: at a glance...</i>			
	CDM <sup>1</sup>	BAMH <sup>2</sup>	HCWA <sup>3</sup>
<b>How many sessions?</b>	5	10 Ind. + 10 Group	20
<b>How often?</b>	Each calendar year	Each calendar year	One-off Item <sup>4</sup>
<b>Speech Pathologists</b>	✓	✗	✓
<b>Psychologist</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Occ. Therapist</b>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Social Worker</b>	✓	✓	✗
<b>Audiologist</b>	✓	✗	✓
<b>Optometrist</b>	✗	✗	✓
<b>Orthoptist</b>	✗	✗	✓
<b>Physiotherapist</b>	✓	✗	✓
<b>Group Sessions</b>	✗	✓	✗
<b>GPs write referral</b>	✓	✓	✗
<b>Paediatricians write referral</b>	✗	✓	✓
<b>Psychiatrists write referral</b>	✗	✓	✓
<b>Adults eligible</b>	✓	✓	✗

1. Chronic Disease Management Plan
2. Better Access to Mental Health Plan
3. Helping Children with Autism Access Treatment Plan
4. Paediatrician must write referral by child's 13th birthday; sessions must be used by 15th birthday