

Family Therapy Service Guidelines

Magellan Behavioral Health* recognizes the importance of family psychotherapy as part of the member's treatment plan. We want to clarify aspects of the delivery of family psychotherapy in the outpatient setting that are reimbursable through the Medicaid Mental Health/Substance Abuse Program.

Family psychotherapy services must focus on the family as a system and include a comprehensive assessment of the family. The specific objective of family psychotherapy is to alter the family system in order to increase the functional level of the member. This therapy must be provided with the appropriate family members and the member together. Session progress notes must identify **every family member involved in the session and the date and start/end time of each family session.**

Family psychotherapy services must:

- Be medically necessary for a behavioral health/substance condition.
- Focus on the level of family functioning as a whole and address issues related to the entire family system.
- Be recommended in the Pretreatment Assessment (biopsychosocial assessment and the initial diagnostic interview). A complete Pretreatment Assessment includes a comprehensive family assessment.
- Be based upon family-focused goals and objectives that are clearly stated in the individualized treatment plan.
- Demonstrate that the licensed therapist has an appropriate understanding of the family dynamics as evidenced in the content of the Pretreatment Assessment, treatment plan and the session progress notes.
- Include goals that are clearly identified in the session progress notes of the treatment plan and discharge plan.

Family psychotherapy is not:

- An encounter between a family member(s) and a licensed therapist in which the family member(s) briefs the therapist about the behaviors, symptoms and problems of the member.
- An encounter between a family member(s) and a licensed therapist in which the therapist briefs the family member(s) about the member's behaviors and problems, progress or barriers to progress.
- A supportive and/or educational discussion between the family member(s) and a licensed therapist.
- A therapeutic encounter between a family member(s) and a licensed therapist in which the therapist provides psychotherapy to address the family member's individual treatment issues.
- A segment of an individual therapy session that is used by a licensed therapist or family member(s) to clarify the member's therapy progress, prognosis, intervention success, homework completion, etc.

Magellan authorizes outpatient family psychotherapy services based upon the following guidelines:

- One family psychotherapy session on any particular day per family.
- Procedure code 90846 (family psychotherapy without the member present) authorized only by exception.
- One family psychotherapy session even though the family may have multiple Medicaid-eligible members with a psychiatric and/or substance abuse disorder. Only one Medicaid-eligible family member may be billed for family psychotherapy even though another identified Medicaid-eligible member is present in the session.
- A family psychotherapy session must be a minimum of 60 minutes.

If you have questions regarding this information, please contact Carl Chrisman at the Magellan Nebraska Care Management Center at 402-437-4218.

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