

Telehealth Guidelines for Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy.

MEDIBANK CLINICAL ENGAGEMENT

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2021 Telehealth Guidelines for Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Document overview:

This document outlines Medibank and ahm's position on telehealth services as an ongoing service provision pathway for psychology, counselling and psychotherapy.

As part of the Covid-19 response Medibank and ahm customers with eligible extras cover could access benefits for telehealth services for psychology, counselling and psychotherapy. It has been recognised that telehealth improves patient access to healthcare and healthcare efficiency, and that there is increasing momentum to support the delivery of telehealth services within the Australian health sector, which has increased significantly since COVID-19.

Medibank and ahm have determined that the telehealth provision of services will continue.

Please note, this document is subject to further review and could be amended at any time.

The provision of telehealth services

The provision of private health insurance benefits for telehealth services aims to support health professionals to deliver accessible, timely healthcare to Medibank and ahm customers in that:

- Telehealth is a method of delivering healthcare that involves the diagnosis and treatment of clinical conditions via phone or video/digital conference.
- Telehealth services are conducted in real-time and have shown to be effective in the treatment or management of selected diagnosed clinical conditions.
- The suitability of the telehealth modality is decided upon by the clinician in consultation with their client (including client's access to technology and comfort levels with telehealth as a substitution for face to face services).
- The clinician and the client are both located in Australia at the time of the service provision.

Telehealth service provision for Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Ensuring Medibank and ahm members can access quality service delivery and evidence-based care is essential.

In October, 2020 counselling services provided by registered providers, have been added to psychological services under eligible extra's cover and include services delivered via telehealth for individual (one on one) or couples/family consultations delivered via telehealth for counselling and psychotherapy **.

By adding counselling services to eligible extras cover, we are focused on providing our customers with more options on ways to invest in their mental health and accessing a broader range of treatment options at home.

The psychological and counselling services will be provided by a network of Medibank recognised psychologists, counsellors and psychotherapists, with benefits paid for individuals, couples and families through face-to-face or telehealth consultations.

Medibank and ahm have worked closely with the Australian Psychological Society (APS), the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) and the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of

Australia (PACFA) to determine the best way to support patients to access and maintain continuity of care whilst ensuring clinicians are working within their scope of practice to deliver evidence-based care.

Medibank and ahm have determined that the telehealth provision of services will continue.

The guidelines Medibank and ahm recommend for telehealth psychological and counselling services apply to eligible Medibank and ahm members, those who have an extras product that includes cover for psychology, counselling or psychotherapy*:

- The customer is undergoing an existing course of treatment, and has seen the psychologist, counsellor or psychotherapist providing the telehealth service during the past six months, or
- For new patients, the clinician has established the appropriateness of this provision of care, and
- The service is undertaken in accordance with the treating clinician's peak body guidelines (the Australian Psychological Society, the Australian Counselling Association or the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia), and
- The clinician should use their clinical reasoning to determine if the patient is clinically appropriate to receive the service via telehealth, and work within their scope of practice.

*Normal waiting periods and annual limits apply to telehealth consultations.

**Telehealth service provision is not covered for Group work.

Service delivery

Benefits will be paid towards psychological, counselling or psychotherapy services provided by a Medibank and ahm recognised provider only. To find out if a service provider is a Medibank or ahm recognised provider, members should ask their service provider if they have a Medibank/ahm Provider number. Not every practice will be offering telehealth services. It is the responsibility of the member to speak with their service provider to determine if they are offering telehealth services.

New Item numbers and Submitting Claims

Medibank members can submit claims through channels including My Medibank and the My Medibank app. When they login to My Medibank, there will be a message on that page providing with directions on how to make these claims.

ahm members can submit claims through channels including online, ahm app or email.

Please note, telehealth claims will not be able to be submitted via electronic claiming channels (HICAPS and Healthpoint).

The following new telehealth item numbers and descriptions have been provided to all funds and HICAPS (Psychology only) & Healthpoint. It is up to each fund's discretion as to whether they will use them or not. Medibank and ahm will use the following new telehealth item numbers and descriptions. These telehealth item numbers are available for all Medibank and ahm recognised providers, not just our Medibank Members' Choice providers. The benefits paid towards these telehealth consultations the same as the equivalent face to face consult.

Modality	New item code and description		Equivalent item code and description	
Psychology	701	Individual Initial/Referred Assessment by teleconsultation	100	Individual assessment
Psychology	801	Individual Subsequent Treatment by teleconsultation	200	Individual treatment
Counselling	800	Counselling individual telehealth consultation	500	Counselling individual consultation
Counselling	900	Counselling couple or family telehealth consultation	600	Counselling couple or family consultation

Provider queries relating to Medibank can be directed to the Medibank provider help desk. The contact details are listed below:

- Members' Choice Ancillary providers - 1300 720 165
- Non Members' Choice Ancillary Providers - 1300 654 887

Provider queries for ahm can be directed to:

- ahm contact centre - 134 246 (follow the prompts to the provider line).