

Mental health assessment for young children (MHAYC)

Overview

In 2021, Governor Inslee signed into law [2021 c 126 § 2](#). This legislation changes policy within Apple Health to match best practices for [mental health assessment for young children](#) (birth through five years of age), including:

- (a) Allowing reimbursement for up to five sessions;
- (b) Allowing reimbursement for provider travel to home and community settings; and
- (c) Requiring use of the Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood (DC:0-5™).

Updated Reimbursement Policies

On January 1, 2022, Apple Health policies were updated to allow reimbursement for up to five sessions for the assessment for children younger than six. In addition, mental health professionals became eligible for reimbursement for travel to home/community settings for these sessions.

Support for Use of the DC:0-5™

The DC:0-5™ is recommended by the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) and the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration](#) (SAMHSA) for developmentally appropriate assessment of young children's mental health. The DC:0-5™ uses developmentally specific diagnostic criteria and reflects mental health disorders that are typically diagnosed in infancy and early childhood. To support providers in adopting the DC:0-5™, HCA and partners provide the following resources:

Training: HCA sponsors the Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health Workforce Collaborative ([IECMH-WC](#)), in partnership with the Washington Association of Infant Mental Health. The IEMCH-WC provides free training in the DC:0-5™, as well as other related professional development supports, to mental health and allied professionals. Since March 2022, approximately 450 mental health professionals and 400 allied professionals have been trained to date, with trainings offered on an ongoing basis.

Other Tools and Guidance: Beginning in 2022, HCA annually publishes a community-informed 'DC:0-5 crosswalk' that connects DC:0-5™ diagnoses 82-0470 (10/23)

to DSM diagnoses and ICD codes, for billing and documentation purposes. The Department of Health (DOH) also updated [licensing requirements](#) in 2022 to allow for use of the DC:0-5 in diagnostic assessment statements. In addition, HCA offers regular Office Hours and webinars to support providers, billers, and administrators in implementing these new policies and practices.

Evaluation and Outcomes

A [survey](#) of 20 Apple Health mental health providers found that these policies and supports have made billing easier, increased provider competence, and improved access to services. However, providers still face challenges in providing developmentally appropriate assessment and diagnosis for young children. HCA is involved in several other efforts to better understand the implementation and impact of these policies, including strengths and needs within the broader infant-early childhood mental health system. These efforts include focus groups with over 100 providers through the [IECMH Statewide Tour](#), with a report on these findings anticipated for Winter 2024, as well as longitudinal analysis of administrative data.

Authority

2021 c 126 § 2; 2021 c 334 § 215 Proviso 43; RCW 74.09.520; WAC 182-531-1400; WAC 246-341-0640.

Budget

\$557,000 of the general fund—state appropriation and \$331,000 of the general fund—Medicaid appropriation for fiscal year 2024; \$522,000 of the general fund—state appropriation and \$297,000 of the general fund—Medicaid appropriation for fiscal year 2025.

More information

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[Mental Health Assessment for Young Children webpage](#)