

Helping Children with Autism (HCWA): Medicare funding for psychology

Here we explain how your child may be eligible to receive a rebate from Medicare for part of the fee of your psychology sessions, under the Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) initiative.

What is the Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) initiative?

Under the government funded Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) initiative, Medicare rebates are available to children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (or suspected of having ASD) when seeing a psychologist for:

- assessment sessions (for children under 13 years old), and
- treatment sessions (for children under 15 years old)

How do I receive the rebate for an Assessment session with a psychologist?

- The young person must have been referred to the psychologist for assessment by a paediatrician or psychiatrist.
- The young person must be suspected of having ASD
- Children are eligible for rebate on up to four assessment sessions provided by a psychologist and/or other allied health professionals (this means 4 in total over the child's lifetime - this does *not* renew each year).

How do I receive the rebate for Treatment sessions with a psychologist?

- You must provide the psychologist with a referral and treatment plan for the child, from a paediatrician or psychiatrist
- The young person must have a diagnosis of ASD or be suspected of having ASD
- Children are eligible for rebate on up to 20 treatment sessions provided by a psychologist and/or other allied health professionals (this means 20 in total over the child's lifetime - this does *not* renew each year).

Which other allied health professionals can I see to receive this rebate?

The rebate can be applied to assessment and treatment sessions provided by a psychologist, as well as these other allied health professions: speech pathologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, and audiologists.

Does the Medicare Safety Net apply to my out-of-pocket expenses?

Yes. Out-of-pocket expenses will count towards the Medicare Safety Net. The Medicare Safety Net is designed to protect high users of health services from large out-of-pocket expenses. For more information on the Medicare Safety Net, visit Medicare.

What about my private health insurance?

You cannot use private health insurance cover to top up the Medicare rebates for these services. You need to decide if you will use Medicare or your private insurance cover to pay for psychology services.

Why is psychology provided for under this scheme? Medicare specifies that psychologists were included in this rebate initiative for the following reason: *“Psychologists are highly knowledgeable in human development and behaviour. This means that they are able to assist not only those who have mental health problems, but children and young people who may have an autism spectrum disorder. Psychologists can help establish a diagnosis and can provide therapeutic input to support the child or young person’s social, emotional and academic development.”*

Note: This information is current as of 29 July 2023. Check with your doctor, psychologist or Medicare directly to check that these items and the details of the item still apply.