

Billing Strategies to Support Addressing Emotional Health

Ensuring the emotional health of children is essential to optimizing wellbeing and health outcomes. Routinely using the billing strategies described below can be an important step to obtaining payment and supporting the important role that pediatricians play in addressing and supporting the emotional health of children with chronic conditions and their families.

Time-Based Billing: General Time-Based Billing

Time-based Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes may be under-utilized and can capture time clinicians are already dedicating to addressing parents' emotional and mental health. Code 99417 indicates that additional time, in 15-minute increments, has been applied to patient care, in addition to time typically associated with visits; it must be listed separately in addition to code 99205 or 99215 for office or other outpatient Evaluation and Management Services. The 99417 code covers direct patient care as well time spent on care coordination, chart review, documentation, and may be applied to telehealth visits with some limitations (*AAP Coding Newsletter: April 2021; 16 (7): 5–12*); www.aap.org).

Time-Based Billing: Chronic Care Management

Chronic care management (CCM) CPT codes cover non-face-to-face services like phone calls to other clinicians, prescription management, discussions with schools, and care plan management. CCM may be billed monthly, and some of the primary requirements for these codes include managing at least two or more chronic conditions and spending at least 20 minutes of clinical staff time per patient per month (*AAP Pediatric Coding Newsletter October 2021; 17 (1): 5–11*). (Table 1); www.aap.org).

Table 1

Quick Reference to Chronic Care Management (CCM) Codes

Code	Description	Time Requirements
99490	Non-complex CCM	>20 min of clinical staff time per month in non-face-to-face services
99487	Complex CCM	>60 min of clinical staff time per month

(*American Academy of Pediatrics; Beyond 2020: Office and Other Outpatient Evaluation and Management Coding. AAP Pediatric Coding Newsletter January 2020; 15 (4): 3. 10.1542/pcco_book189_document001*
American Academy of Family Physicians, Chronic care management; www.aap.org)

Z-Codes

Z codes may help clinicians capture the complexity of visits and identify factors relevant to family wellbeing such as availability of resources (e.g. lack of adequate food), stressful home events, loss of a typical care

provider, or symptoms such as anxiety (International Classification of Diseases, 10th Edition, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM). Z-codes may also identify other social determinants of health that affect mental and emotional well-being (*AMIA Annual Symposium Proceedings; 2020, p.823; CMS September 21; www.cms.gov; www.aap.org*).

Table 2	
Examples of Z-Codes Useful in Describing Mental and Emotional Health (others apply)	
Code	Description
Z60.4	Social isolation, exclusion, and rejection
Z65.8	Other specified problems related to psychosocial circumstances
Z63.79	Other stressful life events affecting family and household
Z59.4	Lack of adequate food
Z59	Problems related to housing and economic circumstances
Z63.32	Other absence of family member

Screening Tools

Screening tools clinicians can identify factors that negatively affect patient or parent wellbeing. Payment for use of standardized tools is common, and effective January 2021, standard screening tools may be considered data reviewed and analyzed for medical decision making (*AAP Pediatric Coding Newsletter April 2021; 16 (7): 3–10*). Examples include the Edinburgh Depression Scale, the Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9), the PEDSQL Family Impact Module, & the Safe Environment for Every Kid (SEEK) Parent Questionnaire-R. (Table 3). Information gained through use of these tools may inform discussions about emotional well-being (www.aap.org; www.aap.org).

Table 3	
Quick Reference to Screening Codes	
Code	Description
96110	Developmental screening
96127	Emotional/behavioral assessment
96160	Health risk assessment of patient
96161	Health risk assessment of caregiver

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**Please note that billing strategies may change; these are current as of Spring 2022.*