

# The **Better Access To Mental Health Care** Initiative

The Australian Government offers Medicare rebates for a range of mental health services delivered to adults and children who meet the eligibility criteria. These services are provided by registered general practitioners (GPs), psychiatrists, psychologists, eligible social workers and occupational therapists.

Individuals must be referred to services under the Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative; this will most commonly happen through your GP. If you wish to access the program, you will need an appointment with your GP. It is best to inform your GP in advance that you would like a longer appointment, to ensure you have enough time available to discuss your needs.

The GP will discuss your concerns with you to determine whether you require a Mental Health Treatment Plan or referral to a psychiatrist or paediatrician to assess your mental health needs. Your GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician can refer you to an appropriate professional under the Better Access to Mental Health initiative where a Mental Health Treatment Plan is in place.

Referral can be for an initial course of treatment of up to six sessions, with a maximum of 10 sessions accessible in any one calendar year depending upon circumstances.

A professional must have a Medicare provider number for rebates to be available through the Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative. Find out from the recommended professional the cost of services, rebates available and any gap payments that may apply before an appointment is made.

If your GP decides that a Mental Health Treatment Plan is not warranted, your GP should be able to discuss alternatives to psychological treatment or provide information on community support options.

## **Other links and further information:**

Beyond Blue, *Getting help - How much does it cost?:*

[http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link\\_id=7.246&tmp=FileDownload&fid=611](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=7.246&tmp=FileDownload&fid=611)

The Australian Psychological Society, *Better Access to Psychologists through the Medicare Benefits Schedule:*

[http://www.psychology.org.au/medicare/fact\\_sheet/](http://www.psychology.org.au/medicare/fact_sheet/)

Department of Health and Ageing, *Better access to mental health care – fact sheet for patients:*

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-ba-fact-pat>

Department of Health and Ageing, *Fact sheet: New transition arrangements for the allied mental health services available under the Better Access initiative:*

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-ba-fact-transfac>

## **Related Permanent Care and Adoptive Families fact sheets:**

[Permanent Care and Adoptive Families Specialist Database](#)

[When to See a GP](#)

[Engaging a Therapist](#)

For more general information on mental health as it relates to children and families in kinship care, permanent care and adoption, visit <http://www.pcafamilies.org.au/resources/external-information/mental-health>

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