



## *Helping children with Autism*

The Australian Government has committed \$190 million for the *Helping Children with Autism* Package. This package creates new items in the Medicare Benefits Schedule, funds training for teachers and support playgroups, early intervention and individual assistance packages for children with autism or any other pervasive developmental disorder (PDD), their families and carers.

The *Helping Children with Autism* package is being implemented across the Department of Health and Ageing, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

### **Medicare Items for Autism or any other Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD)**

This initiative includes \$20.7 million over five years for the implementation of new Medicare items. The new items are available for:

- consultant physicians (paediatricians and psychiatrists) to diagnose and develop a treatment plan for children aged under 13 years on referral from a GP;
- psychologists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists to provide up to four services in total per child to collaborate with the psychiatrist or paediatrician on the assessment where required; and
- psychologists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists to provide early intervention treatment following diagnosis (providing up to 20 services in total per child).

### **Referral requirements**

An eligible allied health professional can provide PDD assessment items (82000-82010) to a child where:

- the child has previously been provided with any MBS service covering items 110 through 131 (inclusive), as provided by an eligible consultant paediatrician; or
- the child has previously been provided with any MBS service covering items 296 through 370 (excluding item 359), as provided by an eligible consultant psychiatrist.

An eligible allied health professional can provide PDD treatment items (82015-82025) to a child where:

- the child has previously been provided with a PDD treatment and management plan (MBS item 135) by an eligible consultant paediatrician; or
- the child has previously been provided with a PDD treatment and management plan (MBS item 289) by an eligible consultant psychiatrist.  
**(NB – these items have only been available since 1 July 2008)**

An allied health professional wanting to provide any of the items 82000-82025 must be in receipt of a current referral provided by a consultant paediatrician or a consultant psychiatrist.

### **Allied Health Items for collaboration with diagnosis and/or contribution to a PDD treatment and management plan**

- Psychology: MBS item 82000
- Speech Pathology: MBS item 82005
- Occupational Therapy: MBS item 82010.

### **Description:**

Professional attendance provided to a child aged under 13 years where:

- the child is referred by an eligible practitioner for the purpose of collaborating with the practitioner for the diagnosis of the child; and/or
- the child is referred by an eligible practitioner for the purpose of contributing to the child's pervasive developmental disorder (PDD) treatment plan, developed by the practitioner;
- the eligible practitioner is a consultant physician in the practice of his or her field of psychiatry or paediatrics;
- the allied health provider attending the child is registered with Medicare Australia as meeting the credentialing requirements for the provision of these services;
- the child is not an admitted patient of an hospital;
- the service is provided to the child individually and in person;
- the service lasts at least 50 minutes in duration.

**These items are limited to a maximum of four services in total per child consisting of any combination of 82000, 82005 and 82010, provided by any combination of allied health professionals.**

**Allied Health Items for early intervention treatment of pervasive developmental disorders (PDD)**

- Psychology: MBS item 82015
- Speech Pathology: MBS item 82020
- Occupational Therapy: MBS item 82025

**Description:**

Professional attendance provided for treatment of autism and any other pervasive developmental disorder (PDD) for a child aged under 15 years where: A PDD treatment plan has been prepared for the child by an eligible practitioner (under item 135 or 289);

- the child has been referred by an eligible practitioner for services that are consistent with the PDD treatment plan;
- the eligible practitioner is a consultant physician in the practice of his or her field of psychiatry or paediatrics;
- the allied health provider attending the child is registered with Medicare Australia as meeting credentialing requirements for the provision of these services;
- the child is not an admitted patient of a hospital;
- the service is provided to the child individually and in person;
- the service lasts at least 30 minutes in duration.

**These items are limited to a maximum of twenty services, in total (in a life time), per child consisting of any combination of 82015, 82020 and 82025, provided by any combination of allied health professionals. Within the 20 services provided, a course of treatment will consist of the number of services stated on the child's referral (up to a maximum of 10).**

**Who can access these services?**

Children with autism or any other PDD can access these services:

- if their condition is being managed by an eligible psychiatrist or paediatrician under a PDD treatment and management plan and that PDD treatment plan is complete prior to the child's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday; and
- if they are under 15 years of age for treatment.

**What is considered autism or PDD for the purposes of the items?**

The conditions classified as PDD for the purposes of these services are informed by the "American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder", Fourth Edition (DSM-IV-TR) and the World Health Organisations International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10).

**More Information:**

Further information on the PDD items can be obtained by visiting the MBS Online website:

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Medicare-Benefits-Schedule-MBS-1>

Inquiries can be directed to [epc.items@health.gov.au](mailto:epc.items@health.gov.au) or (02) 6289 4297.

Further information on the *Helping Children with Autism* package is available at [www.health.gov.au/autism](http://www.health.gov.au/autism).

**Registering with Medicare Australia:**

Provider registration forms can be obtained from Medicare Australia on 132 150 or at [www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au)