



FAQ on Medi-Cal Reimbursement to Training Programs for Services Provided by Supervised Psychological Interns and Postdocs

A. What is Medi-Cal?

Medi-Cal is California's Medicaid health care program for California's 12 million* low to moderate income residents. Since California expanded Medicaid, the covered population expanded beyond the traditional population of pregnant women and children. It now includes adults whose income is below 138% of the poverty line.

Medi-Cal is a state-run program that, like other Medicaid programs across the country, receives matching funds from the federal government to provide physical and behavioral health services to its members.

B. How does Medi-Cal reimburse for services provided by supervised doctoral psychology trainees, like doctoral psychology interns and postdoctoral fellows (trainees)?

Medi-Cal will reimburse for supervised trainees' services in two ways:

1. Psychological Assistants

Trainees can [register with the Board of Psychology](#) as Psychological Assistants (up to six years) if they meet the following [criteria](#):

- a. They have been admitted to candidacy for a doctoral degree in psychology (or education with the field of specialization in psychology or counseling psychology); have satisfactorily completed at least three years of graduate education in psychology; and have passed preliminary doctoral examinations, **or**
- b. They have completed a master's degree in psychology (or education with the field of specialization in psychology or counseling psychology), **or**
- c. They have completed a doctoral degree that qualifies for licensure under [Section 2914](#).

Once the trainees have registered as Psychological Assistants, they can bill for the common therapy and health & behavior codes listed in FAQ C.

This reimbursement is authorized by Medi-Cal [here](#).

2. Professional License Waiver

Trainees can request a Mental Health Licensing Waiver from their respective counties if they meet the following criteria as outlined in [this Department of Mental Health bulletin](#) to local county administrators:

*Figure as of June 2017 – [Medicaid.gov](#)

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- a. Candidates from California can obtain a waiver for up to five years. The psychologist candidate must have successfully completed 48 semester/trimester or 72 quarter units of graduate coursework, not including thesis, internship or dissertation.
- b. Candidates recruited from outside of California can obtain a waiver for up to three years. To be eligible, the candidate must be recruited from outside California and have sufficient experience to gain admission to the appropriate licensing examination. For applicants in this category, a letter from the appropriate California licensing board which states that the applicant has sufficient experience to gain admission to the licensing examination must be included with the waiver application.

Waivers are not transferrable between counties (aka [Mental Health Plans](#)). Trainees can complete the application for this waiver [here](#).

This reimbursement is authorized by California code [here](#).

C. What Codes can trainees bill?

- 1. If trainees are registered as psychological assistants, their services can be reimbursed for the following codes:

CPT-4 Code	Description
90832	Psychotherapy, 30 minutes with patient and/or family member
90837	Psychotherapy, 60 minutes with patient and/or family member
90839	Psychotherapy for crisis; first 60 minutes
90840	each additional 30 minutes [of crisis]
90853	Group psychotherapy
99366	Medical team conference with interdisciplinary team of health care professionals, face-to-face with patient and/or family, 30 minutes or more, participation by non-physician qualified health care professional
99368	Medical team conference with interdisciplinary team of health care professionals, patient and/or family not present, 30 minutes or more; participation by non-physician qualified health care professional

Further details on this billing are [here](#).





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2. Medi-Cal guidance does not indicate that trainees billing under the waiver are limited to using these codes.

D. Why would I seek this type of reimbursement?

There are many ways to help defray the costs associated with running training programs and hiring psychological assistants, and one of them is billing for time that trainees spend seeing patients. Billing Medi-Cal for services provided by supervised trainees can help provide staff salaries, intern stipends, and help offset the cost of supervisor time spent with trainees.

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