Medicaid Fee for Service Policies for Maternal Depression Screening in a Well-Child Visit

Reimbursement and Measurement in States

- Currently, 37 states recommend, require, or allow maternal depression screening to be provided as part of a well-child visit.
- Eleven states distinguish between positive and negative screens in claims data using specific codes or modifiers.
- The most commonly used Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) code is 96161 and reported fee-for-service reimbursement rates for this code vary broadly across states, ranging from $2.18 to $18.
- In 2018, three states (CA, NM, TX) were implementing reimbursement or other guidelines, and two (DC and RI) were in the process of updating reimbursement levels or other guidelines.
- At least four states (KY, PA, RI, and WI) have Title V or Medicaid performance measures related to maternal or perinatal depression screening.

Quick Facts

Maternal depression is:

- Common;
- Experienced disproportionately by low-income women;
- Often undiagnosed and untreated;
- A risk factor for childhood developmental concerns or delays, such as behavior problems and poor cognitive outcomes;
- Treatable if at-risk mothers are identified through screening and connected with resources.

The Role of Medicaid in Screening for Maternal Depression

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid issued a bulletin in 2016 clarifying that state Medicaid agencies may allow maternal depression screenings to be claimed as a service for a child as part of Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefits.

The American Academy of Pediatrics’ 4th edition of Bright Futures recommends maternal depression screening during the one-, two-, four- and six-month well-child visits.

States, such as Virginia, have specific Medicaid programs to improve health outcomes for children and mothers through behavioral risk screenings and follow-up services, including case management and enhanced prenatal services. Learn more here.
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For more information and to view a series of maps identifying state Medicaid policies and their influence on maternal depression screening, visit NASHP’s Healthy Child Development State Resource Center.