

Billing for Suicide Risk Assessment

Did you know that 64% of people who attempt suicide visit their doctor during the month before their attempt?

Billing Codes for Brief Emotional/Behavioral Assessment

CPT Code 96127 was created in 2015 in response to the Affordable Care Act's mandate for mental health treatment to be included in benefits provided by insurance. CPT 96127 is for brief emotional/behavioral assessment, with scoring and documentation, per standardized instrument. Data and scoring must be provided for the screenings that are conducted.

When should you use CPT 96127?

CPT 96127 should be used for administering, scoring, and documenting a brief behavioral or emotional screening, including measures used for depression, anxiety, suicide risk, substance use, ADHD, etc. CPT 96127 can be entered for each screener administered – up to four screeners per patient per visit.

Which insurance companies reimburse for CPT 96127?

Many major health insurance companies reimburse for CPT code 96127, including Aetna, Cigna, Medicare, and United Health Care. The average reimbursement is \$6 per screener. It is good practice to consult directly with insurance companies if you have questions about billing for CPT 96127.

Is there an ICD-10 code to use with CPT 96127?

The corresponding ICD-10 code for CPT 96127 is Z13.89 – encounter for screening for other disorder.

Special Considerations for Clients with Medicare

For Medicare patients, if you are providing the screening in absence of symptoms (ie. a preventative service or annual depression screening) you should use code G0444. If you are providing the screening due to signs or symptoms, CPT 96127 is the appropriate code.

Standardized Screening Instruments for Suicide Risk

Several studies support the use of the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) as an intervention tool for preventing suicides and for use across multiple settings and populations. The tool and training resources are available online for free at cssrs.columbia.edu.

The Ask Suicide Questions Questionnaire has been effective in identifying suicide risk in patients in the emergency department even if they presented with medical or surgical concerns. The tool is available online for free at https://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/2013/file_143902.pdf.

Routinely screening for depression is a preventative measure that can help identify patients and connect them with needed mental health care. The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 is a depression measure available for free at http://www.phqscreeners.com/sites/g/files/g10016261/f/201412/PHQ-9_English.pdf. The Beck Depression Inventory is another screener available at https://www.uab.edu/medicine/home/images/Beck_Depression_Inventory.pdf.

Primary care providers and behavioral health professionals can play a critical role in identifying people who are experiencing suicidal ideation.