

Better access Mental Health Treatment Plan (MHTP) referrals – quick guide

Supported by the GPMHSC, RACGP and APS

A high-quality Mental Health Treatment Plan (MHTP) referral supports safe, coordinated and person-centred care by ensuring the receiving clinician has the information they need to understand the consumer's needs from the outset.

Often, referrals are delayed because there is an issue regarding the number of services.

Under the current **MBS requirements**, if a referral:

- does not specify the number of services;
- specifies more services than permitted for that course of treatment; or
- specifies more services than the patient has remaining for the calendar year,

the treating psychologist or other eligible allied health professional must first contact the referring GP to confirm the required number of services.

This additional step may delay your patient's appointment or commencement of Medicare-rebated treatment.

Before sending your referral, ensure it includes:

Patient details

A completed Mental Health Treatment Plan (or eligible equivalent)

A request for psychological treatment

The number of sessions being referred for

Relevant diagnosis or presenting mental health concerns

GP signature, date and provider number

Common questions

How many sessions should I refer for?

- Initial referral: Up to 6 sessions
- After review: Additional sessions can be referred, up to the annual Better Access limit (10)

Why can't the psychologist decide the number of sessions?

The number of sessions is determined by the referring GP. Medicare requires the referral to specify the authorised course of treatment.

Will my patient have to wait?

Possibly. If the referral is incomplete, the psychologist may need to obtain clarification before providing Medicare-rebatable treatment, which can delay appointment confirmation or commencement of therapy.

Does the Mental Health Treatment Plan count as the referral?

No, the MHTP establishes eligibility, while the referral authorises psychological treatment. Both are required.

Do I need to review the patient before referring for more sessions?

Yes, after the initial course of treatment, the psychologist provides a progress report. The GP should review the patient before issuing a further referral.

Quick tips

- ✓ Include the number of sessions on every referral.
- ✓ Write referrals clearly (eg "Please provide six (6) Better Access psychological treatment sessions.")
- ✓ Including all referral requirements initially helps avoid unnecessary phone calls, administration and delays to patient care.