

# FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS

HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM PROGRAM

The *Helping Children with Autism* program was implemented on 1 July 2008 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. The package assists children with autism or any other pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) such as Rett's Disorder, Asperger's Syndrome or childhood disintegrative disorder.

From 1 July 2011, children eligible for the *Helping Children with Autism* program will be able to have access to a broader range of allied health professionals. Medicare items are now available for eligible children to access services from eligible audiologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, psychologists and speech pathologists, after referral from a paediatrician or psychiatrist.

## Medicare services provided under the *Helping Children with Autism* program

Medicare rebates are available for services provided by a paediatrician, psychiatrist or eligible allied health professional for children with autism/PDD as follows:

- Items 135 and 289 – for a paediatrician or psychiatrist to diagnose and develop a treatment and management plan for a child aged under 13 years; and
- Items 82000, 82005, 82010 and 82030 – for eligible audiologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, psychologists or speech pathologists to provide up to 4 assessment services per child per lifetime, to assist the referring medical practitioner with the diagnosis and development of a treatment and management plan, for a child aged under 13 years; and
- Items 82015, 82020, 82025 and 82035 - eligible audiologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, psychologists or speech pathologists to provide up to 20 early intervention treatment services per child per lifetime, following diagnosis and consistent with the treatment and management plan provided by the referring medical practitioner, for a child aged under 15 years.

## I think my child may have autism/PDD. How can he/she access these services under Medicare?

### Step 1:

It is important that you take your child to see your general practitioner (GP). Your GP will consider your child's condition and decide whether to refer your child to a paediatrician or psychiatrist, and/or to other services provided for children with autism/PDD.

### Step 2:

Take your child to see the paediatrician or psychiatrist who your GP referred your child to. They will assess your child's condition, develop an accurate diagnosis, and create a treatment and management plan. Only one treatment and management plan for autism/PDD, with either a paediatrician or psychiatrist, can be rebated by Medicare per lifetime. The treatment and management plan must be in place before your child's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### Step 3:

The paediatrician or psychiatrist may need to see your child more than once, and may seek the assistance of one or more eligible allied health professional/s (audiologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, orthoptists, physiotherapists, psychologists or speech pathologists) to contribute to the diagnosis and development of a treatment and management plan. Medicare provides rebates for up to 4 of these allied health assessment services per child. These services must be completed before your child's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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## **Step 4:**

After completion of the allied health assessment services, return to the paediatrician or psychiatrist, who will finalise the treatment and management plan, taking into consideration recommendations from the allied health professional/s. The paediatrician or psychiatrist will invoice your child using Medicare item 135 or item 289. Medicare provides a rebate for this service, and keeps a record indicating that a treatment and management plan is in place. You will not be able to collect a rebate for the treatment services (outlined in step 5 below) until this item has been claimed at Medicare.

## **Step 5:**

Based on the treatment and management plan developed by the paediatrician or psychiatrist, your child is entitled to up to 20 treatment services from an eligible allied health professional (audiologist, occupational therapist, optometrist, orthoptist, physiotherapist, psychologist or speech pathologist). Medicare provides rebates for up to 20 of these allied health treatment services per child. These services must be completed before your child's 15<sup>th</sup> birthday.

**NB:** If your child has already been provided with services under the *Better Start for Children with Disability* initiative, he/she cannot access the *Helping Children with Autism* program.

## **How can my child access non-Medicare early intervention services?**

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) offers a number of programs to assist children and families of children with autism/PDD.

Information on FaHCSIA programs is available from the *Helping Children with Autism* Inquiry line - 1800 778 581, via email at [asd@facsia.gov.au](mailto:asd@facsia.gov.au) or at:

[http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/services-help\\_child\\_autism.htm](http://www.facsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/services-help_child_autism.htm)

## **Further Information**

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

<http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/>

Inquiries can be directed to [mbsonline@health.gov.au](mailto:mbsonline@health.gov.au) or by contacting (02) 6289 1555.

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