Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD)

What is it?

Diagnoses Codes – 299.0 – 299.91


NOTE: Most plans specifically exclude treatment of pervasive developmental disorders such as autism, mental retardation and learning disabilities. Coverage for treatment of autism and PDD may also be mandated by state and/or federal mandates. If covered the following criteria would apply.

Autism and pervasive developmental disorders (PDD), which include Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder and Asperger’s syndrome (Diagnoses codes 299.0 – 299.99) are chronic life-long conditions with no known cure. Autism has been estimated to affect approximately 1 in 1,000 children in the United States, and other pervasive developmental disorders have been estimated to affect approximately 2 in 1,000 children in the United States. Based on recent estimates between 60,000 and 115,000 children under the age of 15 years meet diagnostic criteria for Autism.

Autism is characterized by severe deficiencies in reciprocal social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and restricted interests. It usually starts before age 3 and continues throughout life. Early signs of autism include poor use of eye gaze, lack of gestures to direct other people’s attention (especially to show things of interest), decreased social responsiveness, and lack of age-appropriate play with toys (especially imaginative use of toys). A typical symptom is absence of speech development, observed from infancy. Most pathological symptoms of autism result from altered perception of external stimuli, which arouse fear and anxiety. Currently, there are no biological markers for autism and there is no proven cure for this disorder.

Criteria

DIAGNOSIS –

Certain procedures and services are considered medically necessary for assessment of autism and other pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) when the criteria listed below is met:
No babbling by 12 months; or
No gesturing (pointing, waving) by 12 months; or
No single words by 16 months; or
No 2-word spontaneous (not just echolalic) phrases by 24 months; or
Loss of language or social skills at any age.

The following services may be included in the assessment and treatment of the member's condition:

- Parent and/or child interview (including siblings of children with autism)
- Medical exam (complete history and physical) (99211 – 99215, 99201 – 99205)
- Speech language evaluation (92506)
- Formal hearing evaluation (92551 – 92553)
- Blood lead level if child exhibits developmental delay and pica (eating non-foods – Diagnosis Code 307.52) or lives in a high-risk environment. Additional lead screening is considered necessary if pica persists (83655)
- Plasma Amino acid assays to detect phenylketonuria (82136, 82139)
- Genetic testing – karyotype and DNA analysis for fragile X syndrome (FMR1) in the presence of mental retardation or if it cannot be excluded; or if there is dysmorphic features present; and, for confirmation testing for Rett’s Disorder (MECP2) gene mutations (88245 – 88264)
- Metabolic testing if the child exhibits any of the following:
  1. clinical and physical findings suggestive of a metabolic disorder (e.g., lethargy, cyclic vomiting, or early seizure; or
  2. dysmorphic or coarse features; or
  3. evidence of mental retardation; or
  4. mental retardation can not be ruled out; or
  5. occurrence or adequacy of newborn screening for a birth defect is questionable.
- Genetic counseling for parents of a child with autism (96040)
- Electroencephalogram (EEG) for signs that might represent seizure (95812, 95813)
- Sleep deprived EEG (95816 – 95822, 95827) only if the child exhibits any of the following:
  1) clinical seizures or high suspicion of subclinical seizures; or,
  2) symptoms of developmental regression (significant loss of social and communicative function) any age

The following are considered experimental and investigational for assessment of PDD:
- allergy testing (such as food allergies for gluten, casein) (86001 – 86005, 95004, 95010, 95015 - 95071)
- celiac antibodies testing (82705)
- erythrocyte glutathione peroxidase studies (82270 – 82272)
- event-related potentials (such as evoked potential studies) (92585 - 92588)
- hair analysis (P2031, 82495, 96902)
- immunologic or neurochemical abnormalities testing (0111T, 82725 – 82726 fatty acid, 82746 folic acid, 82784 gamma-globulin, 83090, 83516 – 83520, 83540 iron, 83735 magnesium, 84100 – 84105 phosphate, 84443, 84479, 84630 zinc)
- intestinal permeability studies (95075)
- magnetoencephalography (MEG) (95961 – 95967)
- micronutrient testing (such as vitamin level) (84590 A, 84425 B1, 84252 B2, 84207 B6, 82607 and 82608 B12, 78270 – 78272 B12, 82180 C, 82652, 82306, 82307, 82310 D, 84446 E, 84597 K, 0103T, 84591)
- mitochondrial disorders testing (such as lactate and pyruvate) (83605, 83615, 83625, 84210, 84220)
- Neuroimaging studies such as CT, MRI, PET and SPECT scans (70450, 70460, 70470, 70496, 70544 – 70546, 70551, 70552, 70553, 76390, 78600 – 78609, S8035, S8040)
- neuropsychological testing (96101 – 96103, 96116 – 96125)
- provocative chelation tests for mercury (83825, 83015, 83018)
- stool analysis (82705)
- urinary peptides testing (84586)

**TREATMENT –**

Procedures and services **are considered medically necessary** for treatment of autism in accordance with the following:

- Pharmacy Care (Medication Management) (90862)
- Risperdal (Risperidone) – Medication for treatment of irritability associated with Autistic Disorder in children and adolescents aged 5 – 16 years
- Abilify (Aripiprazole) – Medication for treatment of irritability associated with Autistic Disorder in children and adolescents aged 6 - 17 years, including symptoms of aggression towards others, deliberate self-injuriousness, temper tantrums, and quickly changing moods.
- Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS) - Specialist Consultant Service (H0032), Mobile Therapy (H2019) and Therapeutic Staff Support (H2021)
- Psychotherapy and Behavior modification therapy, for co-morbid behavioral or psychological conditions (90804 – 90809, 90810 – 90815, 90845 - 90857)
- Occupational and Physical Therapies (97001 - 97004, 97010 - 97028, 97110 – 97535, G0151) for co-morbid physical impairments
The following are considered experimental and investigational for treatment of PDD (this is not an all inclusive list):

- augmentative communication devices (E1902, 92605 - 92609)
- anti-fungal and anti-viral medications (such as Metronidazole, Fluconazole, Acyclovir, etc.) (J0133, J1450, S0030)
- calcium injection therapy (J0600, J0610, J0620)
- chelation therapy (S9355)
- craniosacral therapy (97799)
- dietary and nutritional interventions (e.g., elimination diets, vitamins)
- facilitated communication (speech generating devices) (E2500 – E2599)
- herbal remedies (such as astragalus, berberis, echinacea, garlic, etc.) (J0133, J1450, S0030)
- hippotherapy (equine therapy – horseback riding) (S8940, 97799)
- hyperbaric oxygen therapy (A4575, C1300, 99183)
- hypnotherapy (90880)
- immune globulin therapy (G0332, J1459, J1561, J1562, J1566 – J1569, J1572, Q4097, 90281 - 90284)
- manipulative and massage therapies (97124, 98925 – 98929, 98940 – 98943)
- music, art, activity, holding, play and sound therapy (G0176, 90823 – 90828, 97799)
- nutritional supplements (e.g., megavitamins, high-dose pyridoxine and magnesium, dimethylglycine, and glutathione)
- secretin infusion (J2850)
- vision therapy and eye testing (92065, 92541-92548)

**NOTE:** Services that are considered primarily educational or training in nature or related to improving academic or work performance are not covered under many benefit plans. The following services are not covered because they are primarily educational and training in nature (this list may not be all-inclusive):

- education, IQ and achievement testing
- educational interventions (such as classroom environmental manipulation, academic skills training and parental training) (98960 – 98962)
to provide the care believed to be in the best interest of the patient, and the provider and patient remain responsible for all treatment decisions.

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