

What is CHAMPVA?

The Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) is a health care benefits program in which the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shares the cost of certain health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries. CHAMPVA is managed by the VHA Office of Community Care (VHA CC) in Denver, Colorado, which processes CHAMPVA applications and medical claims, verifies eligibility, and authorizes benefits.

What outpatient services are available for mental health evaluation and psychotherapy benefits?

- Twenty-three outpatient psychotherapy sessions per fiscal year (October 1 through September 30), when medically necessary
- Two psychotherapy sessions per week in any combination of individual, family, collateral or group
- More than 23 visits per year and more than two visits per week when preauthorized by CHAMPVA
- Individual psychotherapy
- Multiple sessions on the same day to allow for crisis intervention when preauthorized by CHAMPVA

What outpatient services are available for substance abuse disorder benefits?

Under CHAMPVA, you are entitled to three substance abuse disorder treatment benefit periods in your lifetime. A benefit period begins with the first date of covered treatment and ends 365 days later (regardless of the total services actually used within that one year benefit period).

- Sixty therapy sessions for outpatient rehabilitation, when medically necessary, per benefit period at an authorized substance abuse disorder facility (SUDRF)
- Fifteen sessions per benefit period for family therapy provided on an outpatient basis
- Substance abuse disorder sessions beyond the benefit limit require preauthorization by CHAMPVA

What other outpatient therapy services are available under CHAMPVA?

- Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD)
- Crisis Intervention
- Eating Disorders
- Electric Convulsive Therapy (ECT)
- Psychological testing, in conjunction with otherwise covered psychotherapy, is limited to six hours per fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Preauthorization is required from CHAMPVA for testing over six hours. These sessions do not count toward the 23 outpatient psychotherapy sessions per fiscal year.
- Psychotropic Pharmacological Management. These sessions do not count toward the 23 outpatient psychotherapy sessions per fiscal year.

What inpatient services are available for mental health disorder benefits?

- Acute hospital psychiatric care including room, board and other hospital services. Preauthorization is required by CHAMPVA
- Thirty days may be authorized for beneficiaries ages 19 years and older, per fiscal year (October 1 through September 30) or during a single episode of care. Forty-five days may be authorized for children.
- Inpatient services limits are subject to a waiver in special cases after review. A waiver review takes into account the level, intensity and availability of care the patient needs.
- Inpatient psychotherapy is limited to seven sessions per week. More than seven sessions per week requires authorization from CHAMPVA mental health.

What inpatient services are available for substance abuse disorder benefits?

- Detoxification:
 - Requires preauthorization by CHAMPVA.
 - Can only be approved if the care is under general medical supervision.

- If the patient is medically in need of chemical detoxification, but does not require the personnel or facilities of a general hospital setting, detoxification services are covered in addition to rehabilitative care.
- Detoxification services in a DRG-exempt facility are limited to seven days, unless the limit is waived.
- Detoxification inpatient stays do count toward the inpatient mental health limit of 30 days which may be authorized for adults 19 years of age and older, and 45 days which may be authorized for children.
- Rehabilitation services:
 - Require preauthorization by CHAMPVA
 - Are limited to three benefit periods or rehabilitation stays per lifetime
 - Coverage for rehabilitation care is limited to no more than one inpatient stay in hospitals subject to a DRG-based payment system or 21 days in a DRG-exempt facility during a single benefit period.
 - Do count toward the 30 inpatient days which may be authorized for adults 19 years of age and older, and the 45 inpatient days which may be authorized for children

What services are available for partial hospitalization programs (PHP)?

- Sixty days per fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Preauthorization is required by CHAMPVA.
- The program must be at least three hours per day and available five days per week (day, evening or weekend program).
- Care in a PHP facility does *not* count toward the 30-days inpatient limit which may be authorized for adults 19 years of age and older, nor for the 45-days inpatient limit which may be authorized for children.
- Outpatient psychotherapy while a beneficiary is participating in a partial hospitalization program is *not* covered.

What services are available for Residential Treatment Center (RTC) benefits?

- One hundred and fifty days per fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Preauthorization is required by CHAMPVA.

- Care in a TRICARE-authorized facility or certified by The Joint Commission and licensed by the state
- Care for children and adults under the age of 21
- Care when a psychiatrist recommends admission for a diagnosable psychiatric disorder and a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist directs the treatment plan.

NOTE: The treatment plan must include a provision for family therapy.

Who are CHAMPVA-authorized mental health providers?

Any independent mental health provider who is appropriately licensed and/or certified may provide mental health services. Providers who may render care independent of a physician's referral and supervision are:

- Certified Psychiatric Nurse Specialists
- Clinical Psychologists
- Christian Science Practitioners who are listed in the Christian Science Journal
- Family Counselors
- Licensed/Certified Clinical Social Workers (Master's Level)
- Medical Doctors (MDs)
- Mental Health Counselors
- Osteopaths (DO)
- Pastoral Counselors
- Psychiatrists

What benefits are *not* covered under the CHAMPVA mental health benefit?

- Acupuncture/acupressure
- Aversion therapy. The programmed use of physical measures, such as electric shock, alcohol or other drugs (except Antabuse®) as negative reinforcement, even if recommended by a physician, are *not* covered including all professional and institutional charges associated with a rehabilitation treatment program that uses aversion therapy.
- Biofeedback for ordinary muscle tension or psychosomatic conditions
- Carbon dioxide therapy

- Care for specific developmental disorders, learning disabilities and other conditions not attributable to a mental health disorder
- Care or supplies furnished or prescribed by a person in the immediate family
- Cosmetic surgery performed for psychological reasons
- Counseling/self-help services, i.e., nutritional counseling, stress management, lifestyle modifications, counseling services related to tobacco use, or safe sexual practices
- Court-ordered treatment in which the patient is directed to a specific treatment provider and the treatment program is available at no cost to the beneficiary
- Drug maintenance programs where one addictive drug is substituted for another, such as methadone for heroin
- Guided imagery
- Inpatient stay to primarily control or detain a runaway child
- Light therapy for seasonal affective disorder (SAD)
- Marathon therapy
- Marriage counseling
- Megavitamin orthomolecular therapy
- Mind expansion or elective psychotherapy, i.e., Z therapy and transcendental meditation, environmental ecological treatments or primal therapy
- Narcotherapy with LSD
- Outpatient psychotherapy provided while a beneficiary is participating in an inpatient program
- Psychotherapy services or advice rendered by telephone when the beneficiary is in their home or place of residence does not meet the criteria of telemedicine that incorporates electronic data transmission or remote detection and measurement of a condition, activity or function.
- Psychotherapy within 24 hours of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) or electroshock therapy (EST)
- Rolfing
- Services rendered by a provider who is not licensed/certified for the service being provided
- Sexual dysfunction, paraphilias and gender identity disorders
- Testing related to diagnosed specific learning disorders or learning disabilities, to include reading disorder (also called dyslexia), mathematics disorder, disorder of written expression and learning disorders not otherwise specified
- Charges for leisure time programs, outings and movies are not considered part of a CHAMPVA approved inpatient mental health therapy program.

How do I get more information?

- Mail: VHA Office of Community Care
CHAMPVA
PO Box 469063
Denver, CO 80246-9063
- Phone: 1-800-733-8387, Monday-Friday
8:05 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Eastern Standard Time
- Email: Follow the directions for submitting email via IRIS at <https://iris.custhelp.com/app/ask>
- Website: VHA Office of Community Care
<http://www.va.gov/purchasedcare/>

For mental health benefits authorization

For authorization of mental health benefits, providers may contact CHAMPVA.

- Mail: CHAMPVA
PO Box 469063
Denver, CO 80246-9063
- Phone: For general questions about mental health benefits call 1-800-733-8387
For pre-authorization requests, call 1-800-424-4017
- Fax: 1-303-331-7807