



CHAMPVA FACT SHEET 01-1

Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Benefits

What is CHAMPVA?

CHAMPVA is a health benefits program in which the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shares the cost of certain health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries (see Eligibility Fact Sheet 01-3 for criteria for CHAMPVA coverage). CHAMPVA is managed by the VA's Health Administration Center (HAC) in Denver, Colorado. We process CHAMPVA applications, determine eligibility, authorize benefits, and process medical claims.

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

- 23 outpatient psychotherapy sessions per fiscal year (October 1 – 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 the CHAMPVA mental health contractor.
- Individual psychotherapy (limited to 60 minutes unless for crisis intervention).
- Individual psychotherapy sessions in excess of 60 minutes that have been authorized by the CHAMPVA mental health contractor.
- Multiple sessions on the same day to allow for crisis intervention and authorized by the CHAMPVA mental health contractor.

What outpatient services are available under CHAMPVA for substance use disorder benefits?

Under CHAMPVA, you are entitled to three substance use 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).

- 60 group therapy sessions for outpatient rehabilitation, when medically necessary, per benefit period. **Individual therapy is NOT covered for Substance Use Disorder Rehabilitation.**

- 15 sessions per benefit period for family therapy provided on an outpatient basis
- Substance Use Disorder sessions beyond the benefit limit require preauthorization by the CHAMPVA Mental Health Contractor.

What other outpatient therapy services are available under CHAMPVA?

- Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD or ADHD)
- Crisis Intervention: individual psychotherapy therapy over 60 minutes or family therapy over 90 minutes. Preauthorization is required from the CHAMPVA mental health contractor.
- Eating Disorders (preauthorization is required from the CHAMPVA mental health contractor).
- Electric Convulsive Therapy (ECT)
- Psychotropic Pharmacological Management
- Psychological testing, limited to 6 hours a fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Preauthorization is required from the CHAMPVA mental health contractor for testing over six hours.
- Psychoanalysis provided by a graduate of candidate of a psychoanalytic training institute recognized by the American Psychoanalytic Association. Preauthorization is required from the CHAMPVA mental health contractor.

What inpatient services are available under CHAMPVA for mental health disorder benefits?

- Acute care to include room, board, and other hospital services – preauthorization is required from the CHAMPVA mental health contractor
- 30 days for beneficiaries ages 19 and over, per fiscal year (October 1 through September 30) or during a single episode of care
- 45 days per fiscal year for acute inpatient care for beneficiaries ages 18 or younger
- The CHAMPVA mental health contractor may consider a waiver of the 30/45-day limit.
- Inpatient psychotherapy is limited to seven sessions per week. More than seven sessions per week requires authorization by the CHAMPVA Mental Health Contractor.

- Outpatient psychotherapy provided while a beneficiary is participating in an inpatient program is **NOT** a covered service.
- Inpatient stay to primarily control or detain a runaway child is **NOT** a covered service.
- Cosmetic surgery performed for psychological reasons is **NOT** a covered service.

What inpatient services are available under CHAMPVA for substance use disorder benefits?

Detoxification:

- Inpatient services for detoxification. Preauthorization is required by the CHAMPVA mental health contractor.
- Limited to 7 days per admission and counts toward the 30/45-inpatient mental health day limit.
- Detoxification can only be approved if care is under general medical supervision.

Rehabilitation:

- Preauthorized services as approved by the CHAMPVA mental health contractor.
- Limited to no more than one inpatient stay during a single benefit period of 21 days.
- Limited to three benefit periods or rehabilitation stays per lifetime.
- Counts toward the 30/45-day mental health inpatient limit.

What services are available under CHAMPVA for partial hospitalization mental health benefits?

- 60 days per fiscal year (October 1 – September 30) – preauthorization is required from the CHAMPVA mental health contractor.
- A program that is at least 3 hours per day, and available 5 days per week (day, evening, or weekend program).
- Outpatient psychotherapy while a beneficiary is participating in a partial hospitalization program is **NOT** covered.

What services are available under CHAMPVA Residential Treatment Center (RTC) Benefits?

- 150 days per fiscal year (October 1 – September 30) – preauthorization is required by the CHAMPVA mental health contractor at least two days before admission.
- Care in a TRICARE- authorized facility.
- Care for adolescents ages 18 and younger (or under the age of 21 if a full-time student).
- 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.
- Geographically Distant Family Therapy (GDFT) when preauthorized by the mental health contractor.
- Admissions primarily for substance use disorder rehabilitation are **NOT** covered.

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
- Licensed/Certified Clinical Social Workers (Master's Level)
- Medical Doctors (MDs)
- Osteopaths (DO)
- Psychiatrists
- Family Counselors

Providers requiring a physician's referral and supervision include:

- Mental Health Counselors
- Pastoral Counselors

What benefits are NOT covered under the CHAMPVA mental health benefit?

- Acupuncture/acupressure
- Biofeedback for ordinary muscle tension or psychosomatic conditions
- Carbon dioxide therapy
- Care for antisocial behavior

- 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
- Counseling/self-help services, i.e., nutritional counseling, stress management, lifestyle modifications, counseling services related to tobacco use, 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
- Electroshock therapy (EST) as negative reinforcement
- Guided imagery
- Hypnosis
- Learning disorders such as reading disorders or dyslexia, mathematics disorders, disorders of written expression/and or learning disorders not otherwise specified
- Light therapy for seasonal affective disorder (SAD)
- Marathon therapy
- Marriage counseling
- Megavitamin therapy
- Mind expansion or elective psychotherapy, i.e., Z therapy and transcendental meditation, environmental ecological treatments, primal therapy
- Multi-family group therapy
- Narcotherapy with LSD
- 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
- Telephone Consults
- Test of Variables of Attention (TOVA) to diagnose ADD/ADHD

How do I get more information?

- Mail: VA Health Administration Center
CHAMPVA
PO Box 65023
Denver, CO 80206-9023
- Phone: 1-800-733-8387 Monday - Friday 8:15 AM – 6:00 PM Eastern Time
- FAX: 1-303-331-7804
- E-mail: HAC.INQ@MED.VA.GOV
- Website: www.va.gov/hac

- For authorization of mental health benefits, providers in the United States may call the CHAMPVA Mental Health Contractor, Magellan Behavioral Health at 1-800-424-4018. International providers may call 1-720-529-7400. Magellan is also available by fax at 1-800-424-4017. You can write to Magellan Behavioral Health-CHAMPVA, PO Box 3567, Englewood, CO 80155.