

6.6. Mental Health – Supported Employment (SE) Services

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

Supported employment (SE) services are provided by a Mental Health Vocational Program (MHVP) approved under COMAR 10.21.28. Before the Maryland Public Behavioral Health System (PBHS) pays for SE services, the MHVP-SE must enter into a written agreement with Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS).

SE provides job development, job coaching, and ongoing employment support services to individuals with serious mental illness for whom competitive employment has not occurred, has been interrupted, or has been intermittent. These individualized services are provided to enable eligible individuals to choose, obtain, maintain, or advance within independent competitive employment, within a community-integrated work environment, consistent with their interests, preferences, and skills.

For a description of evidence-based SE services and service rules, please refer to Chapter 7.10.

The non-evidence-based SE service, funded under the PBHS, consists of the following reimbursable service phases:

1. **Pre-Placement Phase (H2023):** This includes, at a minimum, MHVP assessment, referral to DORS, entitlements counseling, and discussion of the risks and benefits of disability disclosure and informed choice. A request for re-authorization of the pre-placement service phase may be approved at the Core Service Agency's (CSA's) discretion, not to exceed three service authorizations per fiscal year, based on a change in individual circumstances or the emergence of a new service need. Approval of re-authorization requests is not guaranteed (one unit per service authorization span).
2. **Placement in a Competitive Job (H2024) (does not include agency-sponsored employment):** This includes assisting the participant in negotiating with the employer a mutually acceptable job offer and advocating for the terms and conditions of employment, to include any reasonable accommodations and adaptations requested by the individual. A request for re-authorization for the placement service phase may be approved at the CSA's discretion, not to exceed three service authorizations per fiscal year, based on a change in individual circumstances or the emergence of a new service need. Approval of re-authorization requests is not guaranteed and the request must reflect the need for a separate and independent job development activity (one unit per service authorization span).
3. **Intensive Job Coaching Phase (H2024-21) (reimbursed by DORS; special intensive exceptions may be made for PBHS reimbursement):** This includes the use of systematic intervention techniques designed to help the supported employee learn to perform job tasks to the employer's specifications and to develop the interpersonal skills necessary to assume the employee role and to be accepted as a full-status employee at the job site and in related community-based settings. Job coaching may also be used as a preventative intervention to assist the individual in preserving the job placement, resolving employment crises and in stabilizing the employment situation for continuing employment. In addition to direct job skills training, job coaching includes related job analysis and environmental assessment, vocational counseling, employer education and advocacy, mobility skills training and other support services

as needed to promote job stability and social integration within the employment environment (one unit per 15 minutes of service).

4. **Ongoing Support Services Phase (non-evidence-based) (H2026):** This includes proactive employment advocacy, supportive counseling, and ancillary support services at or away from the job site, to assist the individual in maintaining continuous, uninterrupted, competitive employment and to develop an employment-related support system. This includes encouraging the use of natural supports to the maximum extent possible. This service is not time limited and continues until the individual no longer needs or desires the service (one unit per month of authorized service)
5. **Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program Services to Individuals in Supported Employment (PRP-SE) (S9445):** This includes those psychiatric rehabilitation service interventions needed to assist the individual to restore and to improve coping skills, assertiveness skills, interpersonal skills, and social skills necessary to function adaptively in the work environment or to develop compensatory strategies to minimize the impact of the individual's mental illness on his or her behavior while on the job. The service must be provided on the job, unless the individual has chosen not to disclose his or her disability to the employer. At the individual's request, the service may be performed at a mutually agreed upon community-based location, as indicated in the individual rehabilitation plan (IRP) or disclosure plan. The individual must be competitively employed to receive this service (one unit per month of authorized service; minimum of two encounters for non-evidence-based providers.)

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

Services for participants with Medicaid and uninsured eligible participants are qualified for reimbursement for this service. Service authorization is determined by the CSA for adults in the PBHS with a diagnosis of serious mental illness and transition age youth with a primary mental health diagnosis, who express an interest in competitive employment and desire to work in the community; demonstrate a work history which has been non-existent, interrupted, or intermittent due to a significant psychiatric impairment and requires SE services to choose, obtain, maintain, or advance within competitive employment.

For SE service recipients, income derived from SE may be reviewed to determine if the individual has the resources to pay for services or to pay a co-payment without jeopardizing the individual's employment. Providers may negotiate with the individual regarding contributing to the cost of care.

Participants who are recovering from serious mental illness or are transitioning from PRP services retain access to and eligibility for SE services as their symptoms abate and functioning improves as a means to further support, sustain, or extend their recovery from serious mental illness.

PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY

SE services may only be performed by an approved MHVP and are regulated according to the provisions of COMAR 10.21.28. PRP-SE services may only be performed by a program jointly approved as a MHVP and a PRP and is regulated according to the provisions of COMAR 10.21.21.

AUTHORIZATION PROCESS

MHVP providers must submit the authorization request for SE through ProviderConnect for CSA review within 48 hours of the request. The DORS referral and application are completed coincident with the request for authorization of the Pre-placement Phase. Upon CSA review and approval, SE participants

are presumed eligible and to have a most significant disability for DORS services. The MHVP sends an email to the DORS counselor and the counselor's supervisor, containing the ProviderConnect authorization number of the participant applying for DORS services and requests an initial interview within two weeks.

Based on the CSA's authorization, Beacon Health Options, Inc. (Beacon) assigns an authorization number. The provider then submits the claim to Beacon for reimbursement.

SERVICE RULES

All SE service recipients within the PBHS must apply for eligibility for DORS- funded job development and job coaching services, within the context of SE program services. In rare instances, when the individual refuses to be referred for DORS services and multiple failed attempts to engage the individual in DORS services have been documented and all other avenues to resolution of issues precluding the individual from accessing DORS services have been exhausted, a waiver of the referral requirement may be granted with CSA approval and supporting documentation.

The PBHS may authorize payment for intensive job coaching services if funds are available, with CSA approval, when written documentation from the DORS field counselor on DORS letterhead of the DORS denial of service is submitted and sufficient justification exists to support the request. The MHVP provider may submit a request for pre-authorization of intensive job coaching services to the relevant CSA jurisdiction, and specify the estimated number of units of service required, based upon the individual's specific job duties and a corresponding assessment of the expected frequency, intensity, and duration of his or her support needs. The CSA may grant authorizations up to 400 units of service per participant, with one unit of service equal to 15 minutes of service. All DORS service rules apply. The authorization is in lieu of a DORS authorization, when an official denial of service has been received, and is not intended to supplement the DORS authorization of intensive job coaching hours.

The MHVP provider must secure a competitive placement prior to seeking authorization from the CSA for the placement phase. The CSA will review the placement information to screen out requests for authorization for agency-sponsored employment. Any SE placement or related SE services, occurring in a facility, entity, subsidiary, affiliate, or contract site that is owned, operated, or managed by its own approved supported employment program or its umbrella organization, will be considered to be agency-sponsored employment, and will not be eligible for supported employment authorization and reimbursement within the PBHS.

Ongoing support services or PRP-SE services may not be provided concurrent with intensive job coaching services.

SE service recipients who acquire third party health insurance as a result of employment, obtained by virtue of receipt of SE services through an approved MHVP, may retain eligibility for SE. PRP-SE services must meet all applicable requirements for PRP services, as delineated in COMAR 10.21.21. Claims for PRP Services to individuals in SE must be substantiated by the submission of encounter data which reflects the provision of a minimum of two discrete service encounters per month, separate and apart from the encounter data submitted to validate other PRP levels of care.

The MHVP must provide one employer contact per month, with proper consent and only if the individual has disclosed the existence of a disability to the employer.

CLAIMS PROCESS

Claims are required to be submitted on CMS 1500 forms. One unit is billed for each phase, except for the Intensive Job Coaching Phase. Claims must specify an ICD-10 code, not DSM 5 code. The number of units billed for intensive job coaching services is based on the actual number of units authorized, up to 400 units, with one unit equal to 15 minutes of service. Claims submitted with date spans will be denied.

Encounter data must be submitted to establish the actual number of PRP services delivered for PRP-SE. Any claims submitted for PRP-SE in the absence of corresponding encounter data which reflect compliance with the established service minimum of two discrete service counts per month for non-evidence-based SE providers will be subject to denial of claims payment and subsequent retraction of payment for claims already reimbursed.

Claims for unauthorized services will be denied.