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October 17, 2025

MEMORANDUM

MEMO NOS.
QI-2523
FFS 25-09

TO: QUEST Integration (QI) Health Plans, Medicaid Fee-For-Service (FFS) Providers

FROM: Judy Mohr Peterson, PhD
Med-QUEST Division Administrator

SUBJECT: PRACTICE GUIDELINES ON DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE MENTAL HEALTH ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSIS FOR MED-QUEST MEMBERS THROUGH FIVE YEARS OLD

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance to QUEST Integration (QI) Health Plans and providers engaged in mental health assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of infants, toddlers, and preschool children. Specifically, this memo outlines best practices for providers utilizing the DC:0-5™; provides a crosswalk that maps DC:0-5™ assessment results to existing diagnostic codes to support coding and billing; and provides information to providers on how to access free training resources on the DC:0-5™ tool. QI Health Plans are asked to disseminate these clinical practice guidelines to their provider networks, to encourage tool adoption, and to inform providers of available training.

More than 1 in 5 children ages 3 to 17 (21%) have been diagnosed with a mental, emotional, or behavioral health condition (2021).[1] These may manifest as behaviors labeled as difficult or challenging, placing them at increased risk of negative socio-emotional outcomes including expulsion from child care or preschool settings, which is known to have long-term detrimental educational and health outcomes.[2] Given these potential outcomes, it is important that young children experiencing emotional, relational, or mental health concerns have access to and can receive developmentally appropriate assessment, diagnosis, and treatment.

The Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood™ (DC:0-5™) by ZERO TO THREE is a developmentally informed, culturally responsive diagnostic tool for assessing and classifying mental health and developmental disorders in children from birth through age five. The DC:0-5™ is a developmentally appropriate assessment and diagnosis tool for young children that considers factors that affect a child's relational, social, and emotional wellbeing, where other classification systems, such as DSM-V, or ICD-10, often do not adequately reflect the unique developmental and relational experiences of infants and young children. The use of DC:0-5™ in the assessment of infants and young children is a clinical best practice. Med-QUEST Division (MQD) strongly encourages mental health clinicians treating this age group to seek training in the DC:0-5™ and to use this framework when assessing and diagnosing very young children displaying emotional, relational, or mental health concerns.

Developmental and culturally responsive assessment of our youngest children aligns with MQD's vision that the people of Hawai'I embrace health and wellness. Thorough assessments guided by the DC:0-5™ may identify young children with clinical disorders requiring treatment, enabling their access to appropriate services to be expedited. At the same time, DC:0-5™ guided assessment may avoid pathologizing children demonstrating normal variations of development.

DC:0-5™ Crosswalk

ZERO TO THREE developed a crosswalk of DC:0-5™ Axis 1 Clinical Disorders and their descriptions to their equivalent codes in the DSM-V and ICD-10 to facilitate use of DC:0-5™ without requiring payers to make system changes to accept the newer DC:0-5™ codes. MQD has adapted this to create a state-specific crosswalk between the DC:0-5™, ICD-10, and the

[1] https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/data-research/index.html#cdcreference_2

[2] https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/ExpulsionCompleteReport.pdf

DSM-V. to enable providers to successfully be reimbursed for diagnostic services utilizing the DC:0-5™.

MQD encourages Medicaid enrolled and credentialed mental health clinicians to use the Hawai'i-specific DC:0-5™ crosswalk to identify the corresponding diagnostic codes to report on claims. To support this use, mental health clinicians working with this age group of keiki are strongly encouraged to:

1. Receive clinical DC:0-5™ training,
2. Conduct assessments guided by the DC:0-5™,
3. Determine through those assessments if a child meets the criteria for a DC:0-5™ Axis 1 Clinical Disorder, and
4. Use the crosswalk to identify an ICD-10 or DSM-V diagnosis code to report on claims along with appropriate Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) codes for each visit.

QI Health Plans shall:

- Recognize and reimburse for the specialized Infant Mental Health services delivered to EPSDT eligible children identified with behavioral health needs.
- Ensure claim systems do not contain edits that automatically deny diagnostic codes suggested in the DC 0-5 crosswalk due to a member's young age.
- Offer Health Coordination to families with young children receiving behavioral health services.

Please note: The DC:0-5™ crosswalk is a tool to support the practice of mental health clinicians who have received the DC:0-5™ clinical training. Use of the crosswalk outside of the context of a thoroughly documented assessment guided by the DC:0-5™ framework is not considered acceptable practice.

Resources

For more information about the DC:0-5™ developed by ZERO TO THREE, as well as their other infant and early childhood mental health (IECMH) resources, visit http://www.zerotothree.org/our-work/dc-0-5.

The Hawai'i-specific crosswalk is a living document that was developed by a workgroup of IECMH clinicians, coding experts, and MQD. As the landscape of developmentally appropriate assessment, diagnosis, and treatment for the very young evolves in Hawai'i, the crosswalk may

need to be updated. Therefore, the Association for Infant Mental Health in Hawai‘i (AIMH HI) will maintain the crosswalk as a living document that may be periodically updated by a group of IECMH stakeholders through AIMH HI. For more information or to provide feedback, about DC:0-5™ implementation in Hawai‘i, the Hawai‘i-specific crosswalk, other IECMH resources, and to inquire about free trainings available in Hawai'i, visit AIMH HI at https://aimhhi.org/.

If you have questions about the information in this memo, please email MQDCSO_Inquiries@dhs.hawaii.gov.