

Medical Policy



Title: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) for Acute Stress Disorder and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Professional

Original Effective Date: November 1, 2006
Revision Date(s): June 5, 2007; November 1, 2007; January 15, 2013; May 7, 2013; August 21, 2013; June 8, 2016; May 10, 2017; May 9, 2018; July 3, 2019; April 16, 2021
Current Effective Date: November 1, 2007

Institutional

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State and Federal mandates and health plan member contract language, including specific provisions/exclusions, take precedence over Medical Policy and must be considered first in determining eligibility for coverage. To verify a member's benefits, contact [Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Customer Service](#).

The BCBSKS Medical Policies contained herein are for informational purposes and apply only to members who have health insurance through BCBSKS or who are covered by a self-insured group plan administered by BCBSKS. Medical Policy for FEP members is subject to FEP medical policy which may differ from BCBSKS Medical Policy.

The medical policies do not constitute medical advice or medical care. Treating health care providers are independent contractors and are neither employees nor agents of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas and are solely responsible for diagnosis, treatment and medical advice.

If your patient is covered under a different Blue Cross and Blue Shield plan, please refer to the Medical Policies of that plan.

DESCRIPTION

Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) therapy is a complex method of psychotherapy that combines a range of therapeutic approaches with eye movements or other forms of rhythmical stimulation (e.g., sound and touch) in ways that stimulate the brain's information processing system. Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing was introduced in 1989 as a treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Since then, it has been proposed as a treatment of various psychiatric and behavioral disorders including phobias, panic and anxiety disorders, as well as eating disorders.

POLICY

- A. EMDR is considered a valid therapy component when provided during a psychotherapy session for Acute Stress Disorder or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- B. EMDR is considered **experimental / investigational** as a stand-alone service.

CODING

The following codes for treatment and procedures applicable to this policy are included below for informational purposes. Inclusion or exclusion of a procedure, diagnosis or device code(s) does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member's contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage of these services as it applies to an individual member.

CPT/HCPCS

90832	Psychotherapy, 30 minutes with patient
90833	Psychotherapy, 30 minutes with patient when performed with an evaluation and management service (List separately in addition to the code for primary procedure)
90834	Psychotherapy, 45 minutes with patient
90836	Psychotherapy, 45 minutes with patient when performed with an evaluation and management service (List separately in addition to the code for primary procedure)
90837	Psychotherapy, 60 minutes with patient
90838	Psychotherapy, 60 minutes with patient when performed with an evaluation and management service (List separately in addition to the code for primary procedure)
90899	Unlisted psychiatric service or procedure

- CPT code 90834 should be used when EMDR is used as a therapy component provided during a psychotherapy session for Acute Stress Disorder or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. When billed on a CMS-1500 claim form, if 90899 is billed with 90834 it will be considered content of service.
- CPT code 90899 should be used when EMDR is used as a stand-alone service.

ICD-10 Diagnoses

These diagnoses are otherwise subject to medical policy as stated above.

F43.0	Acute stress reaction
F43.11	Post-traumatic stress disorder, acute
F43.12	Post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic

REVISIONS

Effective 11-01-2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Converted from an experimental / investigational policy to the web policy format due to coverage changes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy liberalized to reflect coverage for EMDR when provided during a psychotherapy session for Acute Stress Disorder or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References were updated.
01-15-2013	Added Medical Policy and Coding Disclaimers.
	In the Coding section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removed CPT code 90806 (Effective 12-31-2012) Added CPT code 90834 (Effective 01-01-2013) Revised Bullet #1 to incorporate the new CPT code 90834.
	Updated Reference format.
05-07-2013	Policy reviewed.
	Formatted policy language. No changes or intent were changed.
08-21-2013	In Coding section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added CPT codes: 90832, 90833, 90836, 90837, 90838. Added ICD-10 Diagnosis codes (<i>Effective October 1, 2014</i>)
06-08-2016	Policy reviewed; no changes made.
05-10-2017	Policy reviewed.
	Updated References section.
05-09-2018	In Coding section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removed ICD-9 codes.
	Remainder of policy reviewed; no changes made.
07-03-2019	In Coding section: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised nomenclature to CPT codes: 90832, 90833, 90834, 90836, 90837, 90838.
	Remainder of policy reviewed; no changes made.
04-16-2021	Medical policy was reviewed with no changes to the medical policy statement

REFERENCES

- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Behavioral Health Liaison Committee, June 6, 2006; June 5, 2007; August 2016.
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Medical Advisory Committee (MAC), August 2, 2006.
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Medical Advisory Committee (MAC), August 2, 2007.

Other References

- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas Blue Shield Report, MAC 02-06.