



QUICK POINTS

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
and Blue Plus

November 4, 2008

Massage and manual therapy exclusion clarification

On September 29, 2008, Provider Bulletin P22-08 was issued highlighting our policy changes that are effective January 1, 2009 for massage and manual therapy services, codes 97124 and 97140. The following information is being provided to help answer your questions, clarify our policy and inform you of the affected coding edits.

Questions and answers

Q1: Which providers will be impacted by this change?

A: Chiropractic manipulation codes (98940-98943) apply only to the chiropractic specialty and the osteopathic manipulation codes (98925-98929) apply only to physicians. However, the policy for codes 97124 and 97140 apply to all eligible practitioners.

Q2: How was this determination made to no longer cover 97124?

A: First, most member contracts were updated for 2009 to exclude therapeutic massage. Second, therapeutic massage is often provided as preparation for a manipulation or other physical medicine therapy. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota instituted the policy to consider massage therapy an integral part of the manipulation or other therapy.

Q3: How was this determination made to no longer cover 97140?

A: Blue Cross has coding edits in place to ensure appropriate coding and consistent claims processing. After careful consideration, Blue Cross instituted the policy to consider manual therapy an integral part of the manipulation or other therapy.

Q4: Why will 97124 deny as provider liable if the service is a member contract exclusion?

A: Blue Cross has coding edits in place to ensure appropriate coding and consistent claims processing. Because massage and manual therapy are integral components of certain therapies or manipulations, these services should not be separately reported on the claim. As such, if 97124 or 97140 is billed in addition to a manipulation or therapy, on the same date of service, we will deny 97124 or 97140 as provider liability, regardless of the presence of a waiver.

If a massage or manual therapy is billed alone, or with codes not subject to our coding edits, 97124 or 97140 will process according to the member's benefit plan.

Please route this information to other interested staff.

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Q5: Will there be circumstances under which 97124 or 97140 will be allowed?

A: Massage therapy, code 97124 will be denied as incidental or mutually exclusive to certain procedures. If billed alone, or with codes not subject to our coding edits, 97124 will process according to the member’s benefit plan. Most member contracts contain a contract exclusion for massage therapy services.

Manual therapy, code 97140, may be allowed. It will be denied as incidental or mutually exclusive to certain procedures. If billed alone or with codes not subject to our coding edits, 97140 may be allowed in accordance with the member benefits.

Q6: Will appending the -59 modifier override these edits?

A: No. Based on chart documentation review, Blue Cross found that massage and manual therapy services submitted with the -59 modifier did not clearly indicate it as a distinct service. Thus we have adopted a corporate policy to disallow 97124 or 97140 submitted with the -59 modifier.

Q7: Can we appeal the denial?

A: Yes. As a participating provider, you may appeal a denied claim. Follow the appeal guidelines found in Chapter 10 of the online Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Provider Policy and Procedure Manual, Appeals.

Q8: Can I bill a member denied services?

A: Any claim submitted to Blue Cross will process per this policy. The remit will indicate whether the member or the provider is liable for the service.

Q9: Which coding combinations are impacted by this change?

A: Massage and manual therapy (97124 and 97140) will be denied incidental or mutually exclusive (provider liable) to chiropractic manipulations, osteopathic manipulations, or other physical medicine procedures billed on the same date of service. The following code combinations and outcomes will be implemented effective January 1, 2009 or are already in place. For information on incidental and mutually exclusive edits refer to Chapter 11 of the online Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Provider Policy and Procedure Manual, Coding Policies and Guidelines.

Massage therapy – 97124 will be denied incidental to the following codes effective January 1, 2009:

97110	97112	97113	97116	97139	97140	97150	97530	97532	97533	97535	97537
97542	97545	97546	98925	98926	98927	98928	98929	98940	98941	98942	98943

Manual therapy – 97140 will be denied incidental to the following codes effective January 1, 2009:

97139	97150	97545	97546
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Manual therapy – 97140 will be denied mutually exclusive to the following codes effective January 1, 2009:

97530	97532	97533
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Manual therapy – 97140 currently denies incidental to the following codes:

98925	98926	98927	98928	98929	98940	98941	98942	98943
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Questions?

If you have additional questions, please contact provider service at (651) 662-5200 or 1-800-262-0820.