



Behavioral Health Diagnosis Coding

With Annissa Johnson



Behavioral health coding

Tips for ICD-10 diagnostic coding for mental health

1. For **diagnostic criteria**, consult the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders/DSM-V
2. Due to multiple severity levels in many behavioral health diagnoses, **include the severity of any diagnosis** that is required
3. Mental health severity levels range from mild, moderate to severe; consult the DSM-V for **symptoms of each severity**
4. Always refer to the **most current version** of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders/DSM for diagnostic criteria

Let's look at a few examples of behavioral health coding →

Specificity is everything

Accurate mental health diagnostic coding strongly depends on the provider being as specific as possible



Diagnosing Major Depression Disorder

Let's take a closer look at the criteria for diagnosing major depression disorder

Symptoms of depression

Depressed mood (such as feelings of sadness or emptiness)

Reduced interest in activities that used to be enjoyed, sleep disturbances (not being able to sleep well or sleeping too much)

Loss of energy or a significant reduction in the energy level

Difficulty concentrating, holding a conversation, paying attention, or making decisions that used to be made easily

Suicidal thoughts or intentions

One of two core symptoms must be present for a diagnosis of depression:

1. Persistent low mood and feelings of sadness with or without crying spells
2. Marked lack of interest in previously pleasurable activities (anhedonia)

Diagnosing Major Depression Disorder

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Seven additional related symptoms

Sleep pattern disturbances

Change in appetite

Tiredness

Sluggish movement or agitation

Difficulty concentrating or solving simple everyday problems

Feelings of guilt and/or worthlessness

Thoughts of death or suicide

Three levels of depression characterized by the following:

Mild: One core symptom and usually no more than four related symptoms

Moderate: Both core symptoms are present as well as four or more related symptoms

Severe: Both core symptoms are present and most, if not all, of the related symptoms.

Diagnosing Major Depression Disorder

For a final diagnosis of Major Depression Disorder, the provider would select the code F32.9 for Major Depressive Disorder, Single Episode, Unspecified.

- If this is not the patient's first time being diagnosed with depression, a diagnosis code for recurrent episode should be selected
- Code F32.9 (as well as most mild mental health disorders) is not typically severe enough illness to justify an inpatient stay as a primary diagnosis, depending on payer clinical criteria
- More typically seen as a primary diagnosis in an outpatient setting

Important consideration
Without documentation of the severity level, the diagnostic code will always map to the lowest severity level



Important Tips for Substance Use ICD-10 Diagnostic Coding

- Substance Use Disorder diagnostic coding is dependent on specification in documentation
- Substance Use Disorders can be a bit more challenging to code in ICD-10

Two key coding language considerations

1. DSM-V uses the term “Use Disorder” with severity levels of mild, moderate, or severe
2. ICD-10 uses the terms use, abuse, and dependence. Depending on the substance, “use” may or may not be an available ICD-10 coding option

Use the following cheat sheet to help you overcome these challenges



When documented together	Assign code for
Use, Abuse	Abuse
Abuse, Dependence	Dependence
Use, Abuse, Dependence	Dependence
Use, Dependence	Dependence

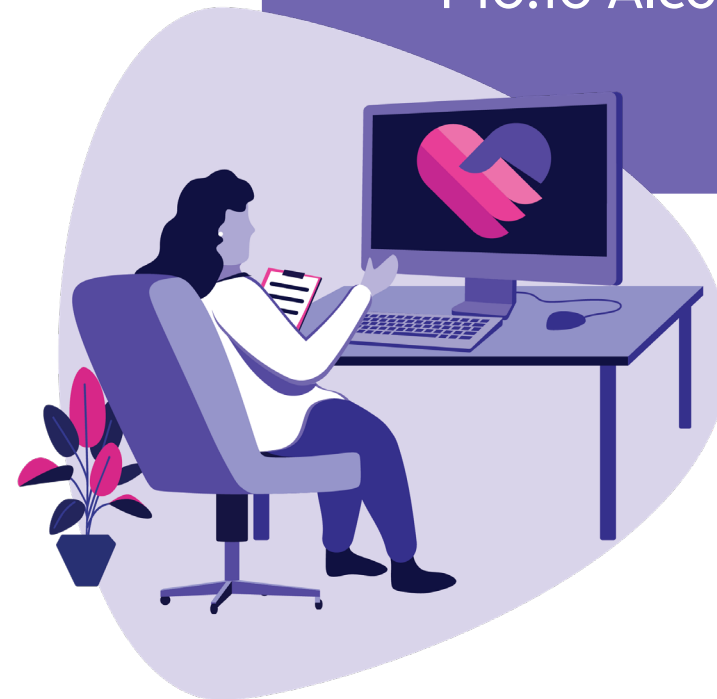
Important Tips for Substance Use ICD-10 Diagnostic Coding

Be sure to consider the following when coding:

- Ensure the patient's substance use frequency matches the criteria for abuse
- Abuse diagnosis does not meet typically met payer clinical criteria for inpatient stay as a primary diagnosis
- More typically seen as primary diagnosis in an outpatient setting

Important note

If a provider were to give a final diagnosis of Alcohol Use Disorder, Abuse; use code F10.10 Alcohol abuse.



Common Terminology to Help with Assigning Diagnosis

Alcohol Abuse: drinking in excess but not having a physical dependence

Alcohol Dependence (alcoholism): person has become dependent on alcohol and is unable to stop drinking even though the alcoholism has negative effects on the person's health, social relationships, and NDA (non-formal daily activities)

Drug Abuse: taking drugs in excess but not having a physical dependence

Drug Dependence: when the chronic use of drugs creates a compulsion to take the drug to experience the effects of the drug or to alleviate withdrawal symptoms

Hypnotics: sleep inducing agents

Sedatives: drugs that induce a relaxed state

Anxiolytics: drugs that relieve anxiety

Hallucinogens: substances that induce a perception of something being present that has no external cause

Nicotine: a poisonous alkaloid; the highly addictive compound found in tobacco

Inhalants: substances that are inhaled for their euphoric effect

Polysubstance Drug Abuse: indiscriminate use of multiple substances



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