



# Mental Health CPT Code Cheat Sheet

Which code to bill for which session - by service type, time, and who's in the room.

## Diagnostic evaluation (first session)

CPT	What it is	Session time	Who it's for / when to use it
90791	Psychiatric diagnostic evaluation	No set time	Intake / biopsychosocial assessment <b>without</b> medical services. Therapists, counselors, social workers, psychologists.
90792	Diagnostic evaluation <b>with</b> medical services	No set time	Intake that includes a medical assessment (e.g., medication review). Billed by prescribers (MD, psychiatric NP/PA).

## Individual psychotherapy (time-based)

CPT	What it is	Session time	Who it's for / when to use it
90832	Psychotherapy, 30 min	16-37 min	Shorter individual session. Bill when face-to-face time falls in this range.
90834	Psychotherapy, 45 min	38-52 min	The standard individual session length for most payers.
90837	Psychotherapy, 60 min	53+ min	Longer individual session. Most-billed psychotherapy code - some payers prefer 90834, so document why 60 min was needed.

## Psychotherapy add-on with E/M (prescribers)

CPT	What it is	Session time	Who it's for / when to use it
+90833	Psychotherapy 30 min + E/M	16-37 min	Add-on billed <b>with</b> an E/M code (e.g., 99213) - not alone. Med-management visit + therapy. Count therapy time only.
+90836	Psychotherapy 45 min + E/M	38-52 min	Same rule, mid-length therapy portion. Put modifier 25 on the E/M to show it's separately identifiable.
+90838	Psychotherapy 60 min + E/M	53+ min	Longer therapy portion alongside an E/M visit. Don't also bill 90832/34/37 same day - duplicate denial.

## Family & couples psychotherapy

CPT	What it is	Session time	Who it's for / when to use it
90846	Family therapy, client <b>absent</b>	~50 min	Session with family/partner when the identified client is NOT present.
90847	Family therapy, client <b>present</b>	~50 min	Conjoint session - couples or family work with the client in the room.
90849	Multiple-family group	Varies	One session serving several families at once.

## Group psychotherapy

CPT	What it is	Session time	Who it's for / when to use it
90853	Group psychotherapy	Per session	Group session (non-family). Bill once per client per group session.

## Crisis psychotherapy

CPT	What it is	Session time	Who it's for / when to use it
90839	Crisis, first 60 min	30-74 min	Urgent assessment + intervention for a client in high distress / crisis.
90840	Crisis, each +30 min	+30 min	Add-on to 90839 for each additional 30 minutes beyond 74 min.

## Common add-on code

CPT	What it is	Session time	Who it's for / when to use it
+90785	Interactive complexity	Add-on	Add to an eval or psychotherapy code when communication is complicated (interpreter, third parties, high-conflict family). Never billed alone.

## Common modifiers

Modifier	Means	When to use it
95	Telehealth, audio + video	Synchronous video session. Most common telehealth modifier.
93	Telehealth, audio-only	Phone session with no video (check payer acceptance).
FQ	Audio-only (Medicare)	Medicare's audio-only behavioral health modifier.
GT	Telehealth (legacy)	Older video modifier some payers still require instead of 95.
25	Separate E/M, same day	On the E/M code when billed with a psychotherapy add-on (90833/36/38).
59	Distinct service	Two separate services same day that would otherwise bundle.
HJ / HO	License level (payer-specific)	Some payers require a modifier showing clinician credential. Confirm per payer.

## Three things that keep claims clean

- **Pick the individual code by face-to-face minutes:** 16-37 → 90832, 38-52 → 90834, 53+ → 90837. Choose the code once you pass the band's lower bound (the midpoint convention) - under 16 min isn't separately billable. (This is *not* the PT/OT 8-minute unit rule; psychotherapy codes aren't unit-based.)
- **Time is measured with the client, not on paperwork.** Don't count note-writing or chart time. A code longer than the documented session supports is a top denial and audit trigger.
- **Documentation must match the code.** Your note should make the billed code obvious - service type, total time, who was present, and medical necessity.