Medical Necessity Criteria

Outpatient Services
Psychological/Neuropsychological Assessment (Testing)

Psychological and Neuropsychological Assessment (Testing) is the use of standardized assessment tools to gather information relevant to a Member’s intellectual and psychological functioning. Psychological assessment (testing) involves the culturally and linguistically competent administration and interpretation of standardized tests to assess a Member’s psychological or cognitive functioning. Psychological tests are used to assess a Member’s cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and intra-psychic functioning on the central assumption that individuals have identifiable and measurable differences that can be elicited by means of objective testing. Psychological assessment (testing) can be used to determine differential diagnosis and assess overall cognitive functioning related to a Member’s mental health or substance use disorder status.

The psychologist’s aim is to obtain data from standardized, valid, and reliable instruments that:
- Lead to an accurate diagnosis;
- Allow for hypotheses to be generated about the Member’s problems and difficulties in functioning; and
- Point to effective treatment strategies.

Testing includes both standard psychological as well as neuropsychological assessment procedures. Neuropsychological assessment (testing) often includes specifically designed tasks used to measure a psychological function known to be linked to a particular brain structure or pathway in an effort to assess cognitive functioning. Neuropsychological tests are a core component of the process of conducting neuropsychological assessment, along with personal, interpersonal, and contextual factors. Unless otherwise indicated, MBHP’s use of the term, psychological assessment/testing will refer to both psychological and/or neuropsychological assessment/testing procedures. Similarly, unless otherwise specified, the term psychologist will refer to both psychologists and neuropsychologists interchangeably.

Psychological Assessment (Testing) is defined by a referral driven by behavioral health and/or substance use disorder treatment/assessment issues. A medical co-morbidity may exist, but the primary purpose of the assessment is related to behavioral health and/or substance use disorder treatment/assessment.

Referrals may also be driven by specific, medical (non-psychiatric) treatment/assessment issues such as documented neurological injury or other medical/neurological condition (e.g., stroke, traumatic brain injury, multiple sclerosis). A behavioral health and/or substance use disorder co-morbidity may exist, but the primary purpose of the assessment is related to a medical (non-psychiatric) treatment/assessment issue.

Educational Assessment (Testing)/Chapter 766 is not a covered benefit for standard diagnostic assessment or IQ testing. Assessment of possible learning disorder or developmental disorders is provided by school system per federal mandate PL 94-142. Any 766 testing that is not covered under the family mandate may be covered. In addition, issues regarding developmental assessment needs are determined by general clinical, medical, school, or early intervention providers.

The administration of a fixed, standard battery of tests is not considered medically necessary; thus,
the process approach of selecting specific tests, which are directly responsive to the referral questions and presenting problems, is generally endorsed by MBHP. (A fixed, standard battery is one that is either given to all patients regardless of diagnostic question, or a battery of tests given, for example, to all new patients.)

Tests must be published, valid, and in general use as evidenced by their presence in the current edition of the Mental Measurement Yearbook, or by their conformity to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests of the American Psychological Association. Tests are administered individually and are tailored to the specific diagnostic questions of concern.

Criteria

Admission Criteria
Either 1 or 2 are necessary for admission to this level of care:
1. Testing is needed for a differential diagnosis of a covered mental health condition, or medical/neurological condition which is not clear from a traditional assessment (i.e., clinical interview, brief rating scales), and diagnostic clarity is needed for effective psychotherapy or psycho-pharmacotherapy treatment planning; or
2. The individual has not responded to standard treatment, there is no clear explanation of treatment failure, and testing will have a timely effect on the individual treatment plan.

In addition, the following is necessary for admission to this level of care:
1. The Member is able to participate as needed such that proposed testing is likely to be feasible (i.e., appropriate mental status, intellectual abilities, language skills).

Psychosocial, Occupational, and Cultural and Linguistic Factors
These factors, as detailed in the introduction, may change the risk assessment, and should be considered when making level-of-care decisions.

Exclusion Criteria
Any of the following criteria is sufficient for exclusion from this level of care:
1. The goal of testing could be achieved, via a diagnostic evaluation by a behavioral health provider. A standard psycho-diagnostic evaluation may answer the referral question;
2. Testing was administered within the last year, and there is no strong evidence of clinically significant change in Member’s status (i.e., worsening or new symptoms or findings);
3. Testing is primarily for a standard diagnostic assessment or for IQ testing;
4. For Members with active substance use, testing is requested within 30 days of active substance use or withdrawal;
5. Testing is primarily to guide the need for, or titration of, medication;
6. Testing is primarily for legal or forensic purposes;
7. Testing is primarily for medical guidance, cognitive rehabilitation, or vocational guidance, as opposed to the Admission Criteria purposes stated above;
8. Testing request appears more routine than medically necessary. Psychological assessment (testing) should not be routinely administered as an approach to evaluation or based primarily on a requirement of the facility. It should be guided by individual clinical circumstances;
9. Measures proposed have no standardized norms or documented validity;
10. The diagnosis of ADHD can in most instances be made by a behavioral health consultation;
11. Testing is for a parenting evaluation;
12. Testing is for a disability determination; or
13. Testing is included in the per diem rate for a facility or program.
**Continued Stay Criteria**

*Does not apply*

**Discharge Criteria**

*Does not apply*