

reprinted with permission from the AAP News, January, 2005

NEWS AND FEATURES

Developmental testing code now includes physician work

from the AAP Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics and the AAP Committee on Coding and Nomenclature

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) published the Medicare Resource-Based Relative Value Scale (RBRVS) final rule on Nov. 7, outlining the relative value units (RVUs) assigned to almost 8,000 CPT codes. Among the codes included was code 96111 (*developmental testing; extended*), which had physician work RVUs assigned for the first time. Code 96111 also is the only code in the Central Nervous Assessments/Tests section of the CPT nomenclature to be recognized as including physician work.

Earlier this year, Lynn Mowbray Wegner, M.D., FAAP, chair of the AAP Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, and Steven E. Krug, M.D., FAAP, member of the AAP Committee on Coding and Nomenclature and AAP RUC advisor, presented physician work and practice expense recommendations to the American Medical Association/Specialty Society Relative Value Scale Update Committee (RUC) for CPT code 96111 (*developmental testing; extended (includes assessment of motor, language, social, adaptive and/or cognitive functioning by standardized developmental instruments) with interpretation and report, per hour*). The RUC accepted the AAP recommendations with the caveat that "per hour" be removed from the code descriptor during the next CPT cycle. These recommendations then were forwarded to CMS for consideration in the publication of the 2004 Medicare RBRVS physician fee schedule.

Until now, code 96111 has not been valued for physician work. The code did, however, include practice expense and a malpractice factor. As of Jan. 1, 96111 was assigned 2.59 physician work RVUs, and this will be factored in with the pre-existing practice expense and malpractice factors, for total RVUs of 3.84.

Using the 2004 Medicare conversion factor of \$35.1339, the new reimbursement for this service will be \$134.91. This is a considerable improvement given that the total value of 96111 in 2003 was 1.90 (1.90 x \$35.1339 = \$66.75).

Payers that utilize RBRVS in establishing their fee schedules will be able to use these RVUs to reimburse appropriately for this service, which typically is performed by pediatric developmental and behavioral subspecialists as part of a comprehensive evaluation. The developmental testing code may be combined with an evaluation and management code (i.e., E/M code) on the same day, provided those services also were offered on that date.

Linda Walsh contributed to this article. For more information, contact her at (800) 433-9016, ext. 7931, or e-mail lwalsh@aap.org.