

Aboriginal Health Workers and Medicare Frequently Asked Questions

1. In NSW what definition is used to describe an Aboriginal Health Worker (AHW)?

The minimum qualification level for an AHW is a Certificate Level III in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health or above, from a recognised institute.

The competencies for Level III AHW include:

- Facilitate communication between clients and service providers
- Process and maintain workplace information
- Contribute to OHS processes
- Comply with infection control policies and procedures in health work
- Work in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health care context
- Advocate for the rights and needs of community members
- Provide information about social and emotional support
- Undertake basic health assessments
- Plan and implement basic health care
- Assist with basic health screening, promotion and education services
- Provide information and support on environmental health issues
- Identify community health issues, needs and strategies
- Apply first aid.

2. In NSW, can AHWs claim the Practice Nurse Medicare item numbers?

No. In NSW, AHWs cannot claim for any of the item numbers that a General Practice Nurse can access. Only in the Northern Territory can AHWs access Practice Nurse Items for immunisation, chronic disease management, wound management and antenatal care.

For more information on Practice Nurse Medicare item numbers, visit <http://www9.health.gov.au/mbs/fullDisplay.cfm?type=note&qt=NotelD&q=M.2>

From May 2008, General Practice Nurses and AHWs can participate in the PIP Domestic Violence Incentive. To be eligible for the PIP Domestic Violence Incentive, practices will need to:

- participate in the PIP;
- be located in a Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas (RRMA) 3-7 location; and ensure that an appropriately trained and qualified General Practice Nurse or AHW is available for the minimum number of sessions per week to act as a referral point to domestic violence support services for people experiencing domestic violence.

For more information on the PIP Domestic Violence Incentive, visit <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider/incentives/pip/files/pip-news-update-feb08.pdf> and

http://www.lifeline.org.au/learn_more/lifeline_training_and_education/rto_training/divert

3. In NSW, can a credentialed AHW apply for an Allied Health provider number?

Yes. In all States and the ACT, Aboriginal Health Workers must have been awarded a Certificate Level III (or higher) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health from a Registered Training Organisation that meets training standards set by the Australian National Training Authority's Australian Quality Training Framework. Medicare Australia holds a list of recognised courses that meet the requirements of the Certificate Level III.

To provide allied health services under Medicare, allied health providers must meet certain eligibility criteria and register with Medicare Australia to obtain a provider number. AHWs employed through NSW Health are not eligible to register with Medicare.

For an appropriately credentialed AHW to register with Medicare, visit

http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider/incentives/files/ma_1449_app_for_initial_medicare_provider_registration_number_for_allied_health_professional.pdf

4. In NSW, can an AHW be part of a Team Care Arrangement?

Yes. AHWs can be part of a Team Care Arrangement. People with chronic conditions and complex care needs can access Medicare rebates for up to five allied health services each calendar year, where their care is being managed by a GP under a GP Management Plan (Item 721) and Team Care Arrangement (Item 723). AHWs are on the list of allied health professionals to whom a GP can refer patients for this purpose.

For more information on the AHW Allied Health item numbers, visit

<http://www9.health.gov.au/mbs/search.cfm?q=10950&sopt=S>

For more information on GP Management Plans and Team care Arrangements, visit

<http://www9.health.gov.au/mbs/fullDisplay.cfm?type=note&qt=NoteID&q=A.30>

and <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/pcd-programs-epc-chronicdisease>

5. In NSW, what is the role of AHWs in immunisation?

In NSW, AHWs cannot administer vaccinations.

AHWs role in immunisation provision can include:

- Community promotion
 - advocate for community members to get immunised
 - develop and distribute promotional resources and information
 - support to community (eg access to services)
- Assist Nurse Immunisers
 - patient/client education and information
- Cold Chain
 - fridge monitoring
 - re-stocking fridge
 - packing esky for outreach clinics
- Development and management of computer systems

- entering immunisation encounters onto the ACIR secure site and/or practice software
- generating due/overdue reports
- recall and reminders