



**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 05|04|2006  
**POLICY LAST UPDATED:** 01|19|2016

## OVERVIEW

Acupuncture services are not available as a standard benefit, but are available as a rider as mandated by Rhode Island General Law (RIGL) 27-20-42 (see full text below). This policy is written to reflect the coverage as it applies to Commercial groups that purchase the acupuncture rider.

## MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

## PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

## POLICY STATEMENT

### Commercial Products

Acupuncture and an initial evaluation (for a new patient) is covered when rendered by a licensed doctor of acupuncture (D. Ac.) or physician (State of Rhode Island-licensed MD or DO)\* only. Acupuncture assistants are not recognized for separate reimbursement and are therefore considered inclusive of the acupuncture reimbursement.

An initial evaluation (99201-99205) is allowed only for new patients. According to CPT guidelines, a new patient is one who has not received any professional services from the physician within the past three years.

The following services are not covered:

- Acupuncture with electrical stimulation;
- Adjunctive therapies, such as but not limited to moxibustion, herbs, oriental massage, etc.;
- Acupuncture when used as an anesthetic during a surgical procedure;
- Precious metal needles (e.g., gold, silver, etc.);
- Acupuncture in lieu of anesthesia;
- Any other service not specifically listed as a covered service.

\*Acupuncture services may be rendered by a physician (MD or DO) when the following Rhode Island Department of Health criteria has been met:

2.2 Any physician licensed in Rhode Island under the provisions of Chapter 5-37 who seeks to practice medical acupuncture as a therapy shall comply with the following:

2.2.1 Meet the requirements for licensure as a doctor of acupuncture set forth in the *Rules and Regulations for Licensing Doctors of Acupuncture and Acupuncture Assistants* promulgated by the Department of Health; **or**

2.2.2 Successfully complete a course offered to physicians that meets the requirements set forth in these regulations and includes no less than the following:

- a) a minimum of three hundred (300) hours of formal instruction;
- b) a supervised clinical practicum incorporated into the formal instruction required in subsection 2.2.2(a) (above).

## BlueCHiP for Medicare

Not applicable

### COVERAGE

Acupuncture is a covered benefit for those groups who have purchased the acupuncture rider. Please refer to the appropriate Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage, or Subscriber Agreement for applicable acupuncture benefits/coverage.

Rhode Island-mandated benefits do not apply to Plan 65, FEHBP, and Medicare Advantage plans. Self-funded groups may or may not choose to follow state mandate(s).

### BACKGROUND

Acupuncture is a traditional form of Chinese medical treatment that has been practiced for over 3,000 years. It involves the practice of piercing the skin with needles at specific body sites to induce anesthesia, to relieve pain, to alleviate withdrawal symptoms of substance abusers, or to treat various non-painful disorders. In acupuncture, the placement of the needles into the skin is dictated by the location of meridians. These meridians are thought to mark patterns of energy flow throughout the human body.

Acupuncture has four components:

- Acupuncture needle(s);
- Target location defined by Chinese medicine;
- Depth of insertion;
- Stimulation of the inserted needle.

*§ 27-20-42 Acupuncture services. – (a) Every group health insurance contract, plan, or group policy delivered, issued for delivery or renewed in this state which provides medical coverage, and every group policy which provides for treatment of persons for the prevention, cure or correction of any illness or physical or mental condition shall provide, as an optional rider, coverage for the services of a doctor of acupuncture as a provider of acupuncture services.*

*(b) For the purposes of this section:*

*(1) "Doctor of acupuncture" means a practitioner licensed under chapter 37.2 of title 5.*

*(2) "Coverage for the services of a doctor of acupuncture as a provider of acupuncture services" means coverage for acupuncture as defined in § 5-37.2-2(1).*

*(c) It remains within the sole discretion of the non-profit medical service corporation as to which doctor of acupuncture it contracts with. Reimbursement is provided according to the respective principles and policies of the non-profit medical service corporation; provided, that no non-profit medical service corporation may be required to pay for duplicative services actually rendered by a doctor of acupuncture and any other health care provider. Nothing contained in this section precludes non-profit medical service corporations from conducting managed care, medical necessity or utilization review.*

### CODING

#### Commercial Products

Local providers in the Acupuncture Specialty (053) are able to file only the codes found in this policy.

The following CPT codes are covered under the **acupuncture rider only**:

97810

97811

**NOTE:** Evaluation and Management codes are only used for separately identifiable procedures. Payment for both an Evaluation and Management and an Acupuncture visit on the same date of service requires modifier 25 to be appended, thus marking the service as separately identifiable.

99201

99202

99203

99204  
99205  
99211  
99212  
99213  
99214  
99215

The following CPT codes are a **contract exclusion** (non-covered):

97813  
97814

### RELATED POLICIES

Not applicable

### PUBLISHED

Provider Update, March 2016  
Provider Update, June 2015  
Provider Update, April 2014  
Provider Update, June 2012  
Provider Update, June 2011  
Provider Update, June 2010  
Provider Update, May 2008

### REFERENCES

RIGL Mandate 27-20-42, <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE27/27-20/27-20-42.HTM>

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