American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

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Dear Medical Director:

I would like to clarify the fact that CPT guidelines indicate that codes 92551 (*Screening test, pure tone, air only*) and 92552 (*Pure tone audiometry (threshold); air only*) are not incidental to the preventive medicine services codes (99381-99397).

According to the American Medical Association's CPT guidelines, the preventive medicine services CPT guidelines, outline that "...screening tests (eg, vision, hearing, developmental) identified with specific CPT codes are *reported separately*" {emphasis added} (*CPT 2013*, page 35). This statement clearly indicates that a hearing screening is a separate service from the preventive medicine service and, therefore, should be recognized as such.

Bright Futures and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommend that hearing screens should be done as a mandatory part of certain age-appropriate preventive medicine service exams. The recommendations mean that at certain developmental phases it is important to screen for hearing problems so that early intervention can take place when needed. This screen is not recommended at every encounter, and is not included with the typical work associated with a preventive medicine service, and therefore it should be reported and paid for separately.

The aforementioned CPT guidelines are applicable to any other screening tests or procedures that are identified with a specific CPT code, such as, intramuscular injection of antibiotics, immunization administration, or cerumen removal. Therefore, providers are also correct in reporting such services separately from any accompanying evaluation and management service. While there is no legal mandate requiring private carriers to adhere to CPT guidelines, it is considered a 'good faith' gesture for them to do so, given that the guidelines are the current standard within organized medicine. Those separately reportable services that are not recognized by a carrier should be designated non-covered benefits and billable to the patient.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Becky Dolan, Health Policy Analyst, Division of Health Care Finance and Quality Improvement at 800/433-9016 x 4325 or bdolan@aap.org . Thank you.

Sincerely,

Margie Andreae, MD, FAAP
Chair, Committee on Coding and Nomenclature