



Group Therapy Notes Tip Sheet

What is Therapy? "Therapy" is a service activity that is a therapeutic intervention that focuses primarily on symptom reduction and restoration of functioning as a means improve coping and adaptation and reduce functional impairments. Therapeutic intervention includes the application of cognitive, affective, verbal or nonverbal, strategies based on the principles of development, wellness, adjustment to impairment, recovery and resiliency to assist a beneficiary in acquiring greater personal, interpersonal and community functioning or to modify feelings, thought processes, conditions, attitudes or behaviors which are emotionally, intellectually, or socially ineffective. These interventions and techniques are specifically implemented in the context of a professional clinical relationship. Therapy may be delivered to a beneficiary or group of beneficiaries and may include family therapy directed at improving the beneficiary's functioning and at which the beneficiary is present.

References

1. [SMHS-Billing-Manual-v-1-4 \(ca.gov\)](#)
2. [SPA 22-0023 Approval \(ca.gov\)](#)

Progress Notes for Groups

Required Progress Note Elements

All progress notes must document the actual services delivered to the client. DHCS requires that each progress note includes the following:

- ✓ The type of service rendered
- ✓ The date of service provided to the client
- ✓ Location of the beneficiary at the time of service
- ✓ A typed or legibly printed name, signature of the service provider, and date of signature
- ✓ A narrative describing the service, including how the service addressed the beneficiary's behavioral health need (e.g., symptom, condition, diagnosis, social determinants of health, and/or risk factors).
- ✓ The progress note for the group service encounter shall also include a brief description of the member's response to the service.
- ✓ Next steps including, but not limited to, planned action steps by the beneficiary, collaboration with the beneficiary, collaboration provider(s) and any update to the problem list as appropriate
- ✓ The group progress note must include an "individualized" portion that is specific to the client. Specific information related to each individual client includes: documenting each client's participation, client's response to the service, how the group met the client's specific needs, and/or client progress. When creating the individualized portion of the note for a client, do not include the names of other clients or group participants in a client's medical record.



- ✓ For all group services, a list of group participants shall be maintained by the provider. To maintain privacy, client names should not be included in the records of other clients or group participants. Therefore, the list of participant names for group services must not be kept in individual client charts. Note for Avatar users, this information is maintained and available in Avatar.
- ✓ Providers shall complete progress notes within three (3) business days of providing a service. The day of the service shall be considered day zero (0)

Key tips to remember when writing Group Therapy notes:

1. **Who can provide groups?** Every provider needs to work within their scope of practice to bill for group therapy. Staff must have the credentials to provide group therapy to claim for this service. Please note that MHRS staff are not able to use this code.
2. **Entering FTF Time for Groups in Avatar:** Avatar does not allow each to enter a different amount of FTF time for a group delivered by co-facilitators. Therefore, if each provider spent a different amount of time in the group, then two separate notes must be written to capture the time for each provider.

Example: If two licensed and/or waived providers are both able to claim for group therapy **and** deliver the same amount of time, then only one practitioner needs to write the note and can simply add the co-facilitators name in the co-practitioner's name section.

3. **Adding Group Time:** Because GRPTY is a 15-minute code, additional time for each group is added using GRP2212. Please note the add-on time will be applied to each provider who delivered the service. As mentioned above, separate notes are required if the amount of time in a group differs by provider.
4. Generally speaking, the contents of the progress note shall support the service code(s) selected and support effective clinical care and coordination among providers. Notes shall include the minimum elements described above, but the nature and extent of the information included may vary based on the service type and the member's clinical needs. Some notes may appropriately contain less descriptive detail than others.
5. If information is located elsewhere in the clinical record (for example, a treatment plan template), it does not need to be duplicated in the progress note

In addition to the above requirements, a group therapy service progress note must also contain:

- ✓ 6. **Multiple staff-Separate Progress Notes:** For groups facilitated by multiple practitioners, a single progress note signed by one of the practitioners shall be used to document the group service provided. Please note, that Avatar does not allow for different service times for each facilitator. If the co-practitioners are claiming for a different duration of service time, then each provider must write a separate note to capture accurate service time.



- ✓ Multiple staff-One Progress Note: While one progress note is acceptable for a group activity where multiple providers are involved; the progress note shall clearly document the specific involvement and the specific amount of time of involvement of each provider of the group activity.