

# PhilHealth launches outpatient mental health benefits package

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) introduced its mental health benefits package for outpatient services during the launching ceremony of the Philippine Council for Mental Health Strategic Framework for 2024-2028 on October 12, 2023.

PhilHealth President and CEO Emmanuel R. Ledesma, Jr. witnessed Vice President for NCR Dr. Bernadette Lico entered into a contract with the National Center for Mental Health led by Dr. Noel Reyes for the implementation of the outpatient mental health benefits package.

Republic Act No. 11036, also known as the Mental Health Act, governs the compulsory treatment of people with mental disorders. As a purchaser for health services, PhilHealth is mandated to provide and improve health services coverage to all Filipinos regardless of socioeconomic status.

With the government's new mandate and through PhilHealth's official partnership with NCMH, the state agency expanded its mental health services to make it more comprehensive and responsive to the needs of the people with mental disorders. "PhilHealth will implement a progressive mental health package, providing members, as well as their dependents, with responsive benefits that ensure financial risk protection as they go through their healing from anxiety and depression." PhilHealth's Chief Emmanuel R. Ledesma, Jr. declared.



The state health insurer published its PhilHealth Circular No. 2023-0018 on October 12, 2023 stipulating its mental health benefits for outpatient services which includes consultations, diagnostic follow-up, psychoeducation and psychosocial support that will soon be available in mental health outpatient facilities that will be accredited for the purpose.

This support for mental health consists of two packages: general mental health services packages amounting to P9,000 and the specialty mental health services packages amounting to P16,000 per person annually. Individuals must be 10 years and older to be eligible to the aforementioned benefits to receive psychiatric services. Meanwhile, no age restriction is imposed for those needing neurological services.

As a way forward, the government aims to prevent premature mortality and improve the quality of life of Filipinos struggling with mental disorders. The state agency is also working towards an enhanced delivery of accessible mental health services and to help stop stigmatization and discrimination.

To ensure that this is progressively realized, PhilHealth has issued a call for mental health facilities nationwide to be accredited to ensure that needed mental health services are accessible to the people. "Together, we can promote mental health among our Kababayans not only here in urban but also in rural areas." Ledesma said. ###