



Partner Policy: Bridging Sessions

Introduction

WPO can, where clinically appropriate, offer Bridging Sessions to assist a participant to transition to ongoing/specialized services and to provide the participant with the support they require to maintain the momentum to engage with the resources they require.

Policy

Bridging Sessions can be offered to participants as an outcome from the telephonic/video clinical conversation when their presenting issue(s) indicate that they require a referral to ongoing/specialized services and there is no reason to believe that a referral to Bridging Sessions could be harmful to the participant's wellbeing. The Bridging Sessions are to provide the participant with initial containment of the issue(s) and encouragement to engage in the ongoing/specialized intervention that will be most beneficial to them while the latter is being arranged.

Whenever a referral to ongoing or specialised services is identified as the most appropriate way forward for a participant, the clinician may consider whether Bridging Sessions could be beneficial in providing the participant with the support they require while the ongoing/specialized referral is being arranged. Bridging Sessions may be an appropriate option if the participant presents as fragile or in need of some structure to contain, educate and encourage then until they are connected to alternative resources. It is an option for the clinician to consider when considering the participant's needs.

One Bridging Session can be offered as the outcome from the telephonic/video clinical conversation.

The counsellor (either an EAP clinician or a provider) delivering the Bridging Sessions must review the case with an EAP case manager after the first session to agree the way forward should further support be required while the ongoing/specialized referral is progressed. Where a short-term focus, suitable for EAP sessions, has been identified during the initial Bridging Session the case manager can agree further sessions up to a total of the number allowed by the participant's EAP benefit. If no short-term focus has been identified, a further Bridging Session (or sessions if clinically advisable) can be agreed while the transitioning of the participant to other more appropriate services is in progress.

Bridging Sessions can be offered in-person/video or via Structured Telephone Counselling as appropriate or requested by the participant and depending on what is included in the contract with their organisation.

Bridging Session(s) can be used to increase the participant's motivation to engage in appropriate ongoing/specialized services, improve resilience and manage anxiety around issues inappropriate for the short-term solution-focused model, while providing psycho-educational information and discussion around more appropriate options. Clinicians providing bridging services must refrain from opening any topics with the participant that would be best managed by ongoing/specialized services, as this is not the provision of a service to actively address a participant's ongoing issues, but rather support to increase motivation to access appropriate ongoing/specialized support.

Participants assessed as being at imminent risk of harm to themselves or others will *not* be offered Bridging Sessions.

Bridging Sessions can be offered to participants reporting moderate (non-imminent) risk of harm to self or others, abusive relationships or problematic substance use where clinically appropriate but only after review and agreement with Partner Clinical Management.

Bridging Sessions cannot be offered to participant's who present with the symptoms of a diagnosable mental health issue (e.g., Borderline Personality Disorder, Schizophrenia or Bipolar).

Bridging Sessions will not be offered to participants whose use of the service is deemed chronic unless it forms part of the care plan put in place by their appointed case manager to manage the participant into more appropriate services and discourage them from contacting the EAP inappropriately. In these circumstances, the Bridging Sessions must be delivered by an EAP clinician, preferably their case manager, not a provider.

Bridging Sessions will not be offered to participants who are abusive, challenging or resistant.

Bridging Sessions will not be offered to Minors.

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Bridging Sessions cannot be offered to couples or families following the initial telephonic/video conversation with the participant. However, a Bridging Session(s) may be offered following the first session assessment with the counsellor if it is considered advisable to encourage the couple or family to engage in ongoing/specialized services.

Bridging Sessions can be offered to participants through engagement in the Aware program if they are looking to improve their resilience, and overall sense of wellbeing, while they are setting up the ongoing/specialized support their clinical presentation indicates is necessary. Participants referred to Aware for Bridging Sessions can access all 6 sessions of the Aware program.

Clinical Practice

- Clinicians must ensure that the participant fully understands the purpose of the Bridging Sessions (to support them in transitioning to the ongoing/specialized services that will be of most benefit to them) and that this is not a referral to start working on their presenting issue(s).
- Clinicians must make it clear on the case documentation that this is a referral to Bridging Sessions and detail what is specifically required from the session(s).
- Clinicians accepting Bridging Sessions cases will be briefed as to what is specifically expected from the Bridging Sessions being offered via the case documentation provided.
- Some participants may wish to continue with the clinician who provided the Bridging Session(s). This request will be subject to the Waiver Policy but will never be refused unless the clinician declines the case.
- Participants who are referred to Bridging Sessions will receive a list of ongoing/specialized resources which are appropriate to address the nature of their presenting issue(s) within 2 business days of their referral to Bridging Sessions being initiated. The clinician accepting the referral to Bridging Sessions will be provided with the same list of resources which they can discuss with the participant as options for the way forward. This list can be supplemented by local resources known to the clinician providing the Bridging session(s) where appropriate.

- An appropriate goal for Bridging Sessions(s) must be agreed with the participant during the clinical telephonic/video conversation. Appropriate goals may be:
 - To identify the most appropriate level of care and assist the participant in gaining motivation to access that care.
 - To identify and engage with private/community services that will provide appropriate ongoing/specialized support
 - To provide some initial containment of the issue(s) the participant reports and improve resilience while they are arranging an ongoing/specialized engagement.

- Some client organisations may have their own specific requirements with regard to how they wish Bridging Sessions to be handled (e.g., That it must always be offered up to the number of sessions available under their benefit unless to do so would increase participant risk): these are documented in the Case Management System and must be followed where they apply.

CHANGE HISTORY:

Document Original Author: Alison Brown; Vice President Global Clinical Quality

Stakeholders: Global Infrastructure, Clinical Operations, Quality, Learning & Development, Sales & Account Management.

Change Date:	Approved by:	Subject Matter Expert(S) [SME] Utilized:	Description/Details of Change [Why & What]:
September 2020	Alan King	Alison Brown/ Maullika Sharma/ Maria Guimaraes	Document Initially Created
March 2021	Alan King	Alison Brown/ Maria Guimaraes	Clinical assessment changed to clinical conversation and face-to-face to in-person.
July 2021	Alan King	Alison Brown/ Maria Guimaraes	Policy re-named from 'Partner Transitional Support' to 'Partner Bridging Sessions' and further emphasis placed on the specialized nature of much ongoing support.