

POLICY

Ethical Billing Policy

The Lifestory Practice

Effective date: 30 August 2026 | **Policy contact:** Carrie Gibbons, Practice Manager

Our commitment to ethical billing

As a therapeutic private practice, we are committed to ethical, transparent and fair billing practices. Our approach to fees reflects the core values of the social work and psychology professions, including integrity, respect, accountability and client-centred care. Ethical billing is both a professional obligation and part of creating a safe, trustworthy therapeutic relationship.

The practice adheres to relevant legislation and funding-body requirements, including Medicare, the NDIS and DVA requirements.

Transparency and informed consent

Clients have the right to understand the financial aspects of their care. To support this:

- Fees are discussed clearly before services commence.
- Written information is provided outlining session fees, payment methods and cancellation policies.
- Informed consent is obtained so clients understand and agree to costs, including potential out-of-pocket expenses.
- Invoices are clear and itemised, detailing the service provided, duration and cost.

Where appropriate and within the limits of the practice model, consideration may be given to financial hardship, including referrals to alternative supports.

Fees and payment

- Fees are set to be reasonable, justifiable and consistent with professional standards and funding-body guidelines.
- Clients are charged only for services delivered, subject to any agreed cancellation or non-attendance fee.
- Billing reflects actual time spent in sessions or approved non-direct services, such as report writing, in line with ethical and funding requirements.

Cancellations and non-attendance

Appointment times are reserved specifically for each client. To support the sustainability of the practice and fairness to all clients:

- Cancellations with less than 24 hours' notice, or non-attendance, may incur a fee in accordance with the applicable service agreement and funding rules.
- A cancellation fee may be charged privately and may not be claimable through Medicare, the NDIS or DVA.
- The cancellation policy is explained before services commence and forms part of informed consent.

We understand that unexpected circumstances arise and encourage open communication wherever possible.

Documentation and accountability

Accurate documentation underpins ethical billing. We maintain:

- detailed records of appointments, cancellations and non-attendance
- accurate notes of services delivered and time spent on direct and approved non-direct work
- secure, traceable financial records that support accountability and audit requirements.

Third-party funded services

When services are funded through Medicare, the NDIS or DVA, additional ethical and compliance requirements apply. Across all funding schemes, we commit to:

- billing only for services delivered and approved under the relevant funding arrangement
- ensuring services are necessary, appropriate and aligned with client goals
- avoiding over-servicing, conflicts of interest or misrepresentation of time or services
- respecting client choice and control in how services are accessed and funded.

Medicare billing

The practice aligns with the Health Provider Compliance Strategy 2025-2030 and Medicare billing requirements. We use current guidance, including the Medicare Billing Assurance Toolkit and AASW sample invoice templates, to minimise the risk of incorrect billing.

NDIS billing

For NDIS participants:

- Claims are complete, truthful and accurate.
- Records are maintained to demonstrate supports delivered, including invoices, service agreements and supporting documentation.
- Claims may be reviewed by the NDIA or relevant regulator to assess compliance.

DVA billing

For DVA-funded services:

- Fees and services comply with the current Schedule of Fees and Notes.
- Claims are submitted according to DVA requirements.
- Compliance guidance is followed to minimise errors and ensure accountability.

Avoiding unethical billing practices

We actively avoid practices that may cause financial harm or undermine trust, including:

- charging for sessions that did not occur without prior agreement to a cancellation policy
- billing more than one funding source for the same service
- inflating time or charging for unapproved activities
- pressuring clients to engage in services beyond their needs or funding capacity.

If ethical uncertainty arises, consultation is sought from professional supervisors, peers or funding bodies, and decision-making is documented.

Balancing ethics and sustainability

While private practice is a business, ethical billing remains central. Fees and billing practices are reviewed regularly to ensure they remain fair, transparent and aligned with current professional and funding standards.

Ethical billing is fundamental to respectful, high-quality therapeutic practice. By maintaining transparency, accountability and integrity in financial interactions, we aim to honour the trust placed in us and uphold the highest standards of the profession.

Billing concerns or complaints

If you have a concern or complaint about billing, we encourage you to raise it with us first. We are committed to resolving concerns respectfully, transparently and in a timely manner.

Step 1: Contact the practice

- Contact Carrie Gibbons, Practice Manager, to discuss billing questions or concerns.
- Many issues can be resolved quickly through open conversation and clarification.

Step 2: External complaint options

If your concern is not resolved, you may contact the relevant external body:

- Medicare (Services Australia) - for concerns related to Medicare billing or claiming practices.
- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission - for concerns about NDIS-funded supports, billing or provider conduct.
- Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) - for concerns relating to DVA-funded services and claims.
- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (South Australia) - for unresolved complaints about a health or community service in South Australia.

Our commitment

We take all billing concerns seriously and view feedback as an opportunity to ensure our practices remain ethical, transparent and aligned with professional standards.

Contact details

Organisation: The Lifestory Practice

ABN: 14 697 722 991

Address: 1A Old Coach Road, Aldinga SA 5173

Primary contact: Carrie Gibbons, Practice Manager

Practice Manager email: Carrie@thelifestorypractice.com.au

General email: admin@thelifestorypractice.com.au

Phone: (08) 7083 8777

Mobile: 0413 006 336

Website: www.thelifestorypractice.com.au