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## **Pre-Surgical Psychological Evaluations for Bariatric Surgery Candidates**

### The Purpose of the Evaluation

Bariatric surgery is a life-altering event. Many patients may share common reactions and paths after having the surgery. However, every patient is treated as an individual. Because of this it is important to do a thorough assessment of each person to try and determine what individual and unique challenges each person may face as the role of food changes in their lives. In this way plans may be made to meet these challenges in the smoothest way possible. The purpose of the evaluation is to support the long-term success of your surgery and lifestyle changes.

### The Evaluation

The evaluation has been designed in accordance with the American Society for Bariatric Surgery's "Suggestions for the Pre-Surgical Assessment of Bariatric Surgery Candidates." The evaluation consists of the completion of standardized psychological tests which are designed to learn as much about a patient as possible (attitudes, behaviors, emotions) in a relatively brief time, review of the paperwork you completed, and a clinical interview with Dr. Bongo. All the information you provided combined with the test results are utilized to create a somewhat brief but comprehensive report, which is then shared with your surgeon's office and anyone else you authorize release to. Feedback and recommendations will also be provided during the evaluation appointment. In most cases, the report should be delivered to the physician that referred you to me within one week after your evaluation has been completed. Please allow 3-4 hours for your evaluation appointment.

### Location

Dr. Bongo will complete your evaluation either by via Zoom/Telehealth, or at her office, depending on whether your insurance allows tele-assessment as a covered benefit, and patient preference. For most patients who have health insurance that allows for tele-assessments, your evaluation will be completed by telehealth/Zoom unless in person services are preferred. Health precautions and technology requirements will be discussed when you call to schedule. Appropriate face coverings may be required for in-person appointments.

### Cost and Insurance

Most insurance plans are accepted. Dr Bongo is an in-network provider for Blue Cross Blue Shield, Aetna, Cigna, Cofinity, InterWest Health, TriCare, Magellan, First Choice of the Midwest, First Choice Health, First Health, First Choice Health, Medicare, and *Wyoming Medicaid*. *Dr Bongo is not an in-network provider for Humana and United Health Care or UMR. Cigna (Cigna policy R31) and BCBS Federal insurance plans require that your evaluation be completed in person.* Dr. Bongo will verify your insurance and obtain preauthorization for payment from your insurance company if needed. Dr Bongo will submit a claim to your insurance carrier and your insurance carrier will pay Dr. Bongo directly. You will not have to pay for the entire cost of the evaluation upfront unless you chose to not utilize your

insurance or if your deductible is not met. Dr. Bongo does ask for a credit card guarantee of payment (optional) for the evaluation. Payment for the evaluation services may be required before your report is released. Patients are expected to pay at the time of the evaluation any co-pay or deductible that may be due.

For the convenience of her patients Dr. Bongo also accepts credit card payments (Visa, Master Card, Discover Card and Health Savings Account debit cards. *Please note that American Express cards not accepted*). For those individuals choosing not to use their insurance the cost for the evaluation is reduced to \$500 (unless additional time is required-\$75 per hour) when payment is received at the time of the evaluation in the form of cash or electronic payment. If you are opting to not use your insurance and wish to take advantage of the discounted rate, you will not be provided with any documentation or a superbill that will support you in submitting your own claim. The discounted rate does not allow for insurance claim submission. You must inform Dr Bongo of your wish to not use insurance for her services and she will provide you with a Good Faith Estimate.

While each insurance company is different, many insurance companies typically pay for much of the cost and your out-of-pocket expense will be the amount of your co-pay or co-insurance (if your deductible has been met). Even when insurance companies verify your benefits in advance, there are no guarantees of what your insurance carrier will actually pay. Even within insurance companies the payment rates may be different for different policies. Some insurance companies (BCBS of Wyoming) will not pay for Dr Bongo's services until your surgery is precertified or if you have a legitimate mental health diagnosis. *If your surgery is not precertified by BCBS of Wyoming, or you don't have a mental health diagnosis, the full cost of the evaluation will be your responsibility. Please note that surgery precertification is not a guarantee that BCBS of Wyoming will pay for your evaluation. PLEASE CONTACT YOUR INSURANCE DIRECTLY TO DETERMINE YOUR FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.* Procedure codes utilized in this evaluation include a combination of the following: 90791, 96130, 96131, 96136 and 96137. The diagnosis code utilized will be Morbid Obesity E66.01 and/or an appropriate mental health diagnosis code if indicated. Some insurance companies will not pay for my services without the use of a mental health diagnosis code, and some will not cover tele-assessment services. Please ask about these specific benefits when you call them.

### About Dr. Bongo

Caroljean Bongo earned her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Argosy University Honolulu in 2005. She has practiced as a Licensed Psychologist in Laramie and Cheyenne since August 2006. In her practice she works with adult individuals completing psychological evaluations with Bariatric surgery candidates. She holds an Arizona psychologist license and is Authorized to Practice Interjurisdictional Telepsychology <https://psypact.org/mpage/psypactmap> into 43 other states. Dr Bongo currently sees patients in her Cheyenne office, and by telehealth. She is affiliated with the American Psychological Association, the Wyoming Psychological Association, The Society for Personality Assessment, and the American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS). Dr Bongo has specific training and experience working with individuals with eating and weight concerns, including weight loss surgery candidates. She has attended the annual meeting of the ASMBS and Obesity Week a number of times over the past 18 years and completed over 1750 bariatric psychological evaluations.

**Caroljean welcomes your calls and would be happy to answer any questions you have regarding your upcoming evaluation. You may reach her at [caroljean@bongopsyd.com](mailto:caroljean@bongopsyd.com) or 307-760-1871**