



Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Education: Caregiver Track



DOES MY CHILD QUALIFY FOR ABA THROUGH MEDICAID?

Medicaid rules are different in every state. Things that may vary include: What diagnoses are covered; Who can give the diagnosis; What tools are used to confirm the diagnosis; How often the diagnosis needs to be reviewed or updated.

To get ABA through Medicaid, most (but not all) states require:



A diagnosis of Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) from an approved professional.



Further, many also require recommendation for ABA from a doctor or approved specialist.

WHAT IS ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a treatment approach designed to help individuals reduce challenging behaviors and acquire new skills that promote greater independence in home, school, and community settings. It emphasizes reinforcing appropriate behaviors, thereby motivating individuals to use their newly learned skills instead of resorting to inappropriate behaviors to meet their needs or desires. ABA treatment specifically targets symptoms and behaviors that hinder learning and independence. However, it is important to note that ABA is not intended to replace school or serve as a substitute for childcare.

IS ABA RIGHT FOR MY CHILD?

Broadly, ABA helps people with autism and other learning, developmental, or behavioral challenges

- > ABA works well for many people, but not everyone benefits or benefits in the same way.
- > The decision to start ABA should be based on your child's needs—not just the diagnosis.
- > For example, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) looks different for each child. Not all people with autism need or will benefit from ABA.

HOW MUCH ABA DOES MY CHILD NEED?

ABA is not one-size-fits-all.

- > The amount of ABA (number of hours per week) and type of services should not be based solely on diagnosis. Amount should match the individual's CURRENT needs, abilities, other treatments, and your family's schedule.
- > Needs are frequently evaluated as treatment needs change over time.

LEVELS OF CARE (HOW MUCH ABA)

ABA treatment varies based on individual needs. As people age or progress in therapy, their ABA needs change. It can be intense or minimal depending on current needs.* Providers should consider how much therapy can be tolerated daily (age, behavior, attention span), other services (school, speech, OT), and your family's availability and ability to participate.

Comprehensive ABA (30-40 hours/week): For those who need help in many areas — need to learn many skills and/or require substantial support to lessen things getting in the way of progress.

Focused ABA (10-25 hours/week): For children with fewer learning or behavioral needs or more specific treatment goals in few areas (like improving social skills or job skills).

Consultation/Caregiver training only Model: Parent or caregiver training with little or no direct treatment with the child.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF ABA IS WORKING?

Speed and amount of progress will differ for everyone. ABA progress depends on many things—age, length in treatment, learning style, and any other conditions they may have.

- > Meaningful progress is made when your child shows many new skills or reduced challenging behaviors that are getting in the way of them being independent and safe in home, school, and community outside of ABA.
- > If your child has been receiving ABA treatment but isn't showing gains after a while, changes to the plan of care or to the type of treatment are needed. This may include change the focus of teaching, change ABA methods, increase or decrease level of care, recommending other services with or instead of ABA.
- > When no meaningful progress is seen over time, the provider may begin slowly decreasing time in ABA until discharge (ending) ABA in favor of other community-based supports and services.

OTHER SERVICES THAT MAY HELP YOUR CHILD

ABA is just one part of the support system for children with ASD. Other helpful services may include:

- > Speech and Language Therapy
- > Occupational Therapy (OT)
- > Services through your child's school (IEP or special education)
- > Social skills groups
- > Life skills or job training (especially for teens)
- > Talk therapy or counseling if appropriate language and communication skills are shown
- > Parent training or family therapy
- > Medication (if recommended by your doctor)



Helping your child thrive with the care they need.

* All levels of care can include one-on-one services, in groups of 2-5, or even in larger group settings (like classrooms). This can be done in home, clinics, schools, and/or in community settings. Group-based services are important to address social skills and to help practice what they learned with others their age and in more natural situations and setting especially when provided in a non-clinical setting.

REDUCING LEVEL OF CARE OR STOPPING ABA

- > ABA treatment is not meant to be long-term intensive support.
- > From the start, your team should help plan how to slowly reduce ABA over time as progress is made or when progress slows or stops.
- > The goal is for your child to move to less intensive support (like fewer hours or group settings, school, etc.), when ready.
- > To make sure your child is ready, ABA treatment should include a focus on making sure individuals show their skills outside of ABA treatment sessions across people and places.
- > Decisions to reduce services should be based on the individual's progress and ability to do well in community environments outside of ABA (like school or home).

SUPERVISION OF ABA STAFF

- > ABA is usually delivered by a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT), supervised by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).
- > Supervision is required! It helps make sure: Your child is making progress; The goals and strategies are working; and therapists are following the plan using the right techniques.



CAREGIVER AND PARENT TRAINING

You are your child's best advocate—and your input is key to their success.

The more informed you are about your child's treatments, the better advocate for them you can be. You are an **ESSENTIAL** part of your child's progress!

ABA should include regular training and support for parents or caregivers throughout treatment.

This helps you learn how to:

- > Encourage positive behavior
- > Teach skills at home
- > Handle difficult behaviors
- > Prepare your child for new situations

Training should match your family's values, culture, and schedule. It should also consider your goals for your child and your family.



HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

Always feel comfortable asking your ABA provider:

- > How your child is doing
- > What progress is being made
- > What your role is
- > If other services might help

There are case managers available to help you find the right fit for your child and your family's needs!