MEDICAL POLICY – 3.01.510

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

Effective Date: Nov. 1, 2019
Last Revised: Oct. 4, 2019
Replaces: N/A

RELATED MEDICAL POLICIES:
None

Select a hyperlink below to be directed to that section.

POLICY CRITERIA | CODING | RELATED INFORMATION
EVIDENCE REVIEW | REFERENCES | HISTORY

Clicking this icon returns you to the hyperlinks menu above.

Introduction

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) applies the principles of how people learn and their motivations to change behavior. The idea behind ABA is that behaviors that are rewarded will increase and behaviors that are not rewarded will decrease and eventually stop. There are several different ABA techniques. Generally, each focuses on what happens before a behavior occurs and what happens after. ABA has been used for people with autism to try to increase language and communication, enhance attention and focus, and help with social skills and memory. This policy describes when ABA may be considered medically necessary. It also discusses the providers the plan covers for ABA services, and the usual number of hours covered during ABA evaluation and therapy.

Note: The Introduction section is for your general knowledge and is not to be taken as policy coverage criteria. The rest of the policy uses specific words and concepts familiar to medical professionals. It is intended for providers. A provider can be a person, such as a doctor, nurse, psychologist, or dentist. A provider also can be a place where medical care is given, like a hospital, clinic, or lab. This policy informs them about when a service may be covered.

Policy Coverage Criteria
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Medical Necessity</th>
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</table>
| Psychotherapy sessions        | Psychotherapy sessions that include applied behavior analysis interventions, that are offered separately from a comprehensive, intensive program using a program manager and therapists and/or therapy assistants, may be considered medically necessary for the treatment of covered mental disorders when:  
  • Provided by state-licensed clinicians practicing within the legal scope of their licensure  
  AND  
  • The services are consistent with psychotherapy sessions designated by current CPT terminology.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) | Treatment that consists of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) provided several hours daily on treatment days and utilizing a program manager, lead therapist, or supervising clinician plus therapists or therapy assistants may be considered medically necessary when the following criteria are met:  
  • The member has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (DSM-5 299.00; ICD-9 299.0, 299.00, 299.01, 299.1, 299.10, 299.11, 299.8, 299.80, 299.81, 299.9, 299.90, or 299.91; DSM-IV 299.00, 299.10, or 299.80; ICD-10 F84, F84.0, F84.2, F84.3, F84.5, F84.8, or F84.9) by a psychiatrist, psychologist, neurologist, or developmental pediatrician. The diagnosis has been validated by a documented comprehensive assessment demonstrating the presence of DSM-5 diagnostic criteria if the diagnosis was made after the release of DSM-5, or demonstrating the presence of DSM-IV diagnostic criteria if the diagnosis was made prior to the release of DSM-5. ABA is considered to be not medically necessary for any other conditions.  
  • The Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is adversely impacting the member’s development, communication, social interactions, or behavior such that the member is unable to adequately participate in age-appropriate home, school, or community activities, or the member is a safety risk to self, others, or property.  
  • The services provided are Comprehensive ABA or Focused ABA as described by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. |
### Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Necessity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive ABA, such as Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention, addresses multiple domains simultaneously with the goal of bringing functioning to or near levels typical for chronological age. Focused ABA has a goal of addressing a limited number of behavioral or skill development targets.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• An individualized treatment plan is developed and documented prior to or within 30 days of beginning ABA. The treatment plan is based on a comprehensive assessment, often called a functional analysis or Functional Behavioral Analysis that was conducted prior to, but no earlier than within 6 months of, the initiation of ABA. The treatment plan includes the following elements:</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Verification of ASD diagnosis by DSM-5 or DSM-IV criteria.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Identification and detailed description of targeted symptoms and behaviors. Targeted symptoms and behaviors must be those which are preventing the member from adequately participating in age-appropriate home, school, or community activities, or that are presenting a safety risk to self, others, or property.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Objective baseline measurements of each targeted symptom and behavior via measurements that are administered by or approved by the program manager/lead behavioral therapist (defined below).</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Detailed description of treatment modality or modalities and interventions for each targeted symptom and behavior.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Treatment goals and measures of progress for each targeted symptom and behavior, with estimated timeframes for achieving the goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Inclusion of parents (or active caretakers or legal guardians when appropriate); specifically, detailed description of interventions with parents, including as appropriate parental education, training, coaching, support, overall goals for parents, and plan for transferring interventions with member/identified patient to parents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Plan for communication and coordination with other providers and agencies as appropriate, including day care, school, and other health care providers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service</td>
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</table>
**Service** | **Medical Necessity**
--- | ---
  | ▪ When there is continued absence of adequate improvement or when progress plateaus, and there is no reasonable expectation of further progress, the treatment plan should be revised to reflect a planned discontinuation of ABA, and referral to other resources as appropriate, allowing for a brief period of time for termination with the member and parents.

Please see below for information on ABA service providers.

**Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Service Providers**

**Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services are either provided by, or are under the supervision of, a clinician (often referred to as the program manager or lead behavioral therapist) who is one of the following:**

- A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, and state-licensed or state-certified in states that require state licensure or state certification for behavior analysts.
- Any other state-licensed Behavior Analyst.
- A state-licensed physician who is a psychiatrist, developmental pediatrician, or pediatric neurologist.
- A state-licensed psychiatric advanced nurse practitioner/advanced registered nurse practitioner.
- A state-licensed psychologist.
- A state-licensed Master’s level mental health clinician (eg, licensed clinical social worker, licensed marriage and family counselor, licensed mental health counselor).
- A state-licensed occupational therapist or speech therapist.
- Any other provider whose legally-permitted scope of licensure includes behavior analysis.

**Alternately, in Washington State, ABA services may be provided by an agency that is licensed by the Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Behavioral Health Resources as a Community Mental Health Agency or as a Licensed Behavioral Health Agency, and is also certified by the Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Behavioral Health Resources to deliver ABA services. The agency must meet all requirements of, and must deliver ABA services in full compliance with, WAC 388-865-0469. In other states that specifically license agencies for ABA, ABA services may be provided by an agency that is so licensed.**
Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Service Providers

When direct services to the member/identified patient and parents are provided by individuals who are not BCBAs or one of the licensed health care professionals listed above (often referred to as therapy assistants, behavioral technicians, or paraprofessionals), the therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals receive weekly clinical supervision from the program manager/lead behavioral therapist as follows for each patient: generally two hours for every 10 hours of direct service provision, with a minimum of two hours weekly when direct service provision is 10 hours per week or less. Supervision may need to be temporarily increased to meet individual patient needs at certain times in treatment, eg, a significant change in response to treatment, or a significant increase in clinical complexity. Supervision may be conducted entirely in-person, or may be a combination of in-person and remote supervision, but some portion of the supervision (no specific time amount is specified) should be conducted in-person. Some supervisory time (no specific time amount is specified) should be utilized for direct observation of direct service provision by the therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals. In addition, the program manager/lead behavioral therapist conducts a case review and treatment plan review with the therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals at least once/month. Although some states are licensing therapy assistants/behavioral technicians, these requirements apply to all therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals regardless of licensure status.

Therapy assistants, behavioral technicians, or paraprofessionals must be state registered, certified, or licensed in states that require state registration, certification, or licensure for those practitioners.

Board Certified assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBAs) or state-licensed Assistant Behavior Analysts may function as program managers/lead behavioral therapists only in states in which state law or regulation stipulates that such functioning is in the legally-permitted scope of practice of BCaBAs or licensed assistant behavior analysts. Board Certified assistant Behavior Analysts or state-licensed Assistant Behavior Analysts may not provide ABA treatment services without supervision by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Licensed Behavior Analyst, or other higher-level licensed provider as permitted under state law or regulation.

Direct treatment services provided by Board Certified assistant Behavior Analysts and state-licensed Assistant Behavior Analysts are considered to be equivalent to services provided by therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals.
Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Service Providers

Supervision of ABA programs and of clinicians providing direct treatment services must be provided by licensed behavior analysts in states in which state law or regulation stipulates that only licensed behavior analysts are permitted to provide ABA supervision, or by licensed behavior analysts or licensed assistant behavior analysts in states in which state law or regulation stipulates that only licensed behavior analysts or licensed assistant behavior analysts are permitted to provide ABA supervision (see next paragraph).

Licensed assistant behavior analysts may function as program managers/lead behavioral therapists and provide supervision to therapy assistants, behavioral technicians, or paraprofessionals who are providing direct treatment services, in states in which state law or regulation stipulates that supervision of therapy assistants, behavioral technicians, or paraprofessionals is in the legally-permitted scope of practice of licensed assistant behavior analysts. When a licensed assistant behavior analyst provides supervision to therapy assistants, behavioral technicians, or paraprofessionals, then supervision of the licensed assistant behavior analyst by a licensed behavior analyst, a BCBA, or other licensed clinician, although required, is considered to be a component of the licensed assistant behavior analyst’s training and therefore not a medically necessary component of the treatment program.

Board Certified assistant Behavior Analysts must be state certified or licensed in states that require certification or licensure for BCaBAs.

After diagnosis and referral for ABA, 6-10 hours is usually sufficient for the initial evaluation/assessment for ABA and initial treatment planning by a program manager/lead behavioral therapist if focused ABA is planned. However, for Comprehensive ABA, more complex cases, or cases in which a complete functional analysis is needed, may require up to 15-20 hours for the initial assessment and treatment planning. The assessment may include time-limited observation in the school setting when behavioral or other difficulties that are manifestations of the individual’s Autism Spectrum Disorder are evident and problematic in the school setting. Following the initial evaluation/assessment, 20-40 hours total per week is the usual range of services for Comprehensive ABA, including direct services to member/identified patient and/or parents by program manager/lead behavioral therapist and/or therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals, program development, treatment plan development, case review, and supervision. Fewer hours are required for Focused ABA. There is no evidence in the published literature to support more than 40 hours per week under any circumstances. Direct services to the member/identified patient are
Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Service Providers

generally provided one-on-one or with parents present, most often in the home setting but also in community settings depending on the member/identified patient’s needs and the settings where significant difficulties occur. Social skills groups may be appropriate as a component of a member’s overall ABA program.

Functional analysis re-assessments, when determined to be appropriate, are generally conducted once every 6 to 12 months. The re-assessments may include time-limited observation in the school setting when behavioral or other difficulties that are manifestations of the individual’s Autism Spectrum Disorder continue to be evident and problematic in the school setting.

Coding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>0359T</td>
<td>Behavior identification assessment – Used for initial evaluation/assessment, initial functional analysis, and periodic functional analysis re-assessments (must be done by a program manager/lead behavioral therapist) (code terminated 1/1/19) Alternate to HCPCS H0031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0362T</td>
<td>Behavior identification supporting assessment, each 15 minutes of technicians’ time face-to-face with a patient, requiring the following components: administration by the physician or other qualified health care professional who is on site; with the assistance of two or more technicians; for a patient who exhibits destructive behavior; completion in an environment that is customized to the patient’s behavior Alternate to HCPCS H2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0363T</td>
<td>Exposure behavior follow-up assessment, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional with the assistance of one or more technicians, face-to-face with the patient; each additional 30 minutes of technician(s) time (code terminated 1/1/19) Alternate to HCPCS H2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0364T</td>
<td>Adaptive behavior treatment by protocol, administered by technician, face-to-face with one patient; first 30 minutes of technician time (code terminated 1/1/19) Alternate to HCPCS H2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0365T</td>
<td>Adaptive behavior treatment by protocol, administered by technician, face-to-face with one patient; each additional 30 minutes of technician time (List separately in</td>
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<td>Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>0368T</td>
<td>Adaptive behavior treatment with protocol modification administered by physician or other qualified health care professional with one patient; first 30 minutes of patient face-to-face time (code terminated 1/1/19) \ Alternate to HCPCS H2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0369T</td>
<td>Adaptive behavior treatment with protocol modification administered by physician or other qualified health care professional with one patient; each additional 30 minutes of patient face-to-face time (List separately in addition to code for primary procedure) \ (code terminated 1/1/19) \ Alternate to HCPCS H2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0370T</td>
<td>Family adaptive behavior treatment guidance, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional (without the patient present) \ (code terminated 1/1/19) \ Alternate to HCPCS H2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0372T</td>
<td>Adaptive behavior treatment social skills group, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional face-to-face with multiple patients \ (code terminated 1/1/19) \ Alternate to HCPCS H2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97151</td>
<td>Behavior identification assessment, administered by a physician or other qualified health care professional, each 15 minutes of the physician’s or other qualified health care professional’s time face-to-face with patient and/or guardian(s)/caregiver(s) administering assessments and discussing findings and recommendations, and non-face-to-face analyzing past data, scoring/interpreting the assessment, and preparing the report/treatment plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97153</td>
<td>Adaptive behavior treatment by protocol, administered by technician under the direction of a physician or other qualified health care professional, face-to-face with one patient, each 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97154</td>
<td>Group adaptive behavior treatment by protocol, administered by technician under the direction of a physician or other qualified health care professional, face-to-face with two or more patients, each 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97155</td>
<td>Adaptive behavior treatment with protocol modification, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional, which may include simultaneous direction of technician, face-to-face with one patient, each 15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97156</td>
<td>Family adaptive behavior treatment guidance, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional (with or without the patient present), face-to-face with guardian(s)/caregiver(s), each 15 minutes</td>
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<td>Code</td>
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<tr>
<td>97158</td>
<td>Group adaptive behavior treatment with protocol modification, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional, face-to-face with multiple patients, each 15 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HCPCS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>H0031</td>
<td>Mental health assessment – Used for initial evaluation/assessment, initial functional analysis, and periodic functional analysis re-assessments (must be done by a program manager/lead behavioral therapist)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H0032</td>
<td>Mental health service plan development – Used for program development, treatment plan development or revision, data analysis, case review, treatment team conferences, supervision of therapy assistants/paraprofessionals, and for real-time direct communication/coordination with other providers (must be done by a program manager/lead behavioral therapist)</td>
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<tr>
<td>H2014</td>
<td>Skills training and development, per 15 minutes – Used for direct services to member and/or parents (including parent education and training) by therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2019</td>
<td>Therapeutic behavioral services, per 15 minutes – Used for direct services to member and/or parents (including parent education and training) by program managers/lead behavioral therapists</td>
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<tr>
<td>S5108</td>
<td>Home care training to home care client – Used for direct services to member by therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals</td>
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<tr>
<td>S5109</td>
<td>Home care training to home care client – Used for direct services to member by therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5110</td>
<td>Home care training, family -- Used for direct services to parents and/or family (including parent education and training) by therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5111</td>
<td>Home care training, family -- Used for direct services to parents and/or family (including parent education and training) by therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** CPT codes, descriptions and materials are copyrighted by the American Medical Association (AMA). HCPCS codes, descriptions and materials are copyrighted by Centers for Medicare Services (CMS).

**Related Information**
Benefit Application

Except when otherwise directed by specific health plan stipulations (ie, member contracts or summary plan descriptions), covered providers for ABA for Autism Spectrum Disorders are those which are indicated within the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Service Providers section above. Services provided by unlicensed individuals, including therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals and BCBAs that are not state-licensed, are covered only for the provision of ABA for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Except when otherwise directed by specific health plan stipulations (ie, member contracts or summary plan descriptions), covered services for ABA for Autism Spectrum Disorders are those which are listed in the Coding section above.

Except when otherwise directed by specific health plans, in-network providers of ABA for Autism Spectrum Disorders must use the codes listed in the Coding section above in order to be reimbursed for ABA services.

Group treatment is covered only for social skills groups, and only when conducted by program managers/lead behavioral therapists, not when conducted by therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals. Group treatment other than social skills groups is considered to be not medically necessary because there is no credible scientific evidence that group treatment other than social skills therapy is an effective component of ABA for the treatment of ASD.

Social skills groups in excess of two sessions per day are considered to be not medically necessary. All credible studies demonstrating the effectiveness of ABA have been conducted with ABA consisting predominantly of individual and family treatment with minimal group treatment, at most one to two social skills group sessions per week.

Individual treatment when the member is in a group setting, as distinct from group treatment, is covered only when the clinician is working exclusively with the member for the entire time that the member is in the group setting.

Except when otherwise directed by specific health plan stipulations, program development, treatment plan development and revision, data analysis, case review, supervision of therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals, and real-time direct communication/coordination with other providers are covered services as part of the provision of ABA for Autism Spectrum Disorders. Program development, treatment plan development and revision, data analysis, case review, supervision of therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals, and real-time direct communication/coordination with other providers are covered only for program managers/lead behavioral therapists, not for therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals.
Team meetings are covered only (1) when they are specifically for treatment plan development or revision or case review for one specific patient, or (2) when meeting with the parents of one specific patient to discuss the treatment of that patient.

Charting data or plotting graphs, as distinct from actual analysis of data, are not covered.

Therapy assistants'/behavioral technicians'/paraprofessionals' time in supervision is not a covered service because the service being provided (supervision) is being delivered by the program manager/lead behavioral therapist, not by the therapy assistant(s)/behavioral technician(s)/paraprofessional(s). Exception: When the program manager/lead behavioral therapist is supervising the therapy assistant/behavioral technician/paraprofessional while the latter is providing covered direct treatment services, then for only the time during which that is taking place, both the supervision by the program manager/lead behavioral therapist and the direct treatment services by the therapy assistant/behavioral technician/paraprofessional are covered services.

Except when otherwise directed by specific health plans, services not listed in the Coding section above are not covered services for ABA for Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Some portion of the direct service provision (no specific time amount is specified) may take place in the school setting when behavioral or other difficulties that are manifestations of the individual's Autism Spectrum Disorder are evident and problematic in the school setting. Direct service provision in the school setting must consist entirely of bona-fide ABA treatment activities; the ABA clinician may not be utilized as a classroom aide for the patient, as a 1:1 teacher for the patient, or in any other capacity that is a function of and the responsibility of the school system.

Schools and school programs for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and tuition for specialized schools for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, are non-covered activities and services because schools are not covered facility types, and educational therapy, educational services, and services that are the responsibility of school districts, and should therefore be provided by school staff, are specifically excluded from coverage (except if otherwise directed by specific health plan stipulations). Although such schools or programs may claim that they consist of ABA services, significant portions of the school day or programs are for educational and other activities that are not ABA services. Coverage is allowed for direct service provision in the school setting that consists entirely of bona-fide ABA treatment activities, delivered by covered ABA providers.

Camps, camp programs, day camps, school break camps, summer camps, and any similar activities are non-covered activities because camping, camp programs, recreational programs, and recreational programs are specifically excluded from coverage (except if otherwise directed by specific health plan stipulations). Although such programs may claim that they consist of ABA
services, significant portions of the programs are for recreational purposes (not covered), and
are for the purpose of providing professional assistance so that youngsters with ASD can
partake of normal recreational camp activities, which does not constitute the provision of
treatment. In addition, the goals and interventions in these programs are not a continuation of
the same goals and interventions that were in place prior to the camp programs, do not
continue as part of the patients’ ABA treatment after the camp programs, and generally do not
target specific individualized impairments that were being targeted for treatment prior to the
camp programs and that will continue to be being targeted for treatment after the camp
programs, ie, the goals, interventions, and targeted impairments are not components of
patients’ ongoing ABA treatment plans and services. Also, although 1:1 direct treatment services
constitute the core component of and the majority of time for ABA, these program provide little
or no direct treatment services.

Direct service provision by telehealth modalities, including to parents or family members, is
considered to be not medically necessary because there is no credible scientific evidence that
the provision of ABA by telehealth modalities is effective or safe. All credible studies
demonstrating that ABA is effective and safe have been conducted with in-person evaluations
and intensive in-person direct treatment services.

The following are considered to be unnecessary duplication of services and therefore not
medically necessary in the provision of ABA services:

- More than one program manager/lead behavioral therapist for a member/identified patient
  at any one time.

- More than one provider group/clinic/agency/organization providing ABA services for a
  member/identified patient at any one time.

- More than one clinician (program managers/lead behavioral therapists, or therapy
  assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals, or program manager/lead behavioral
  therapist and therapy assistant/behavioral technician/paraprofessional) providing direct
  (ABA) treatment services to the same identified patient at the same time.

The provision of ABA treatment and a different type of treatment (eg, ABA and speech therapy)
to the same identified patient at the same time is considered to be not medically necessary.
Individuals with ASD cannot adequately focus on and engage in two different treatment
modalities simultaneously.

With the exception of social skills groups, the provision of ABA direct treatment services to more
than one identified patient in the same treatment session is considered to be not medically
necessary. There is no established clinical need for or advantage to more than one patient in a
treatment session other than social skills groups. (This does not apply to family therapy, or to
collateral sessions with a parent or parents, in which or for which there is only one identified patient.) However, this does apply to treating siblings with the exception of bona-fide family therapy sessions or social skills groups (the latter are expected to include other patients, not just siblings), the provision of ABA direct treatment services to siblings together is considered to be not medically necessary.

Activities and therapy modalities that do not constitute behavioral assessments and interventions utilizing applied behavior analysis techniques are considered to not constitute ABA services, and are therefore either non-covered services if listed as member contract exclusions, or are otherwise considered to be not medically necessary. Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Training of therapy assistants/behavioral technicians/paraprofessionals (as distinct from supervision)
- Preparation work prior to the provision of services
- Accompanying the member/identified patient to appointments or activities outside of the home (eg, recreational activities, eating out, shopping, play activities, medical appointments), except when the member/identified patient has demonstrated a pattern of significant behavioral difficulties during specific activities, in which case the clinician is present to actively provide treatment, not to just supervise, control, or contain the member/identified patient
- Transporting the member/identified patient in lieu of parental/other family member transport, except when the member/identified patient has demonstrated a pattern of significant behavioral difficulties during transport, in which case transport is still provided by parent/other family member, and the clinician is present to actively provide treatment to the member/identified patient during transport, not to just supervise, control, or contain the member/identified patient
- Assisting the member with academic work or functioning as a tutor, except when the member has demonstrated a pattern of significant behavioral difficulties during school work
- Functioning as an educational or other aide for the member/identified patient in school
- Provision of services that are part of an IEP and therefore should be provided by school personnel, or other services that schools are obligated to provide
- Provider doing house work or chores, or assisting the member/identified patient with house work or chores, except when the member has demonstrated a pattern of significant behavioral difficulties during specific house work or chores, or acquiring the skills to do
specific house work or chores is part of the ABA treatment plan for the member/identified patient

- Provider travel time
- Transporting parents or non-patient family members
- Babysitting
- Respite for parents/family members
- Provider residing in the member’s home and functioning as live-in help (eg, in an au-pair role)
- Peer-mediated groups or interventions
- Multiple family group therapy
- Training or classes for groups of parents of different patients
- Hippotherapy/equestrian therapy
- Pet therapy
- Auditory Integration Therapy
- Sensory Integration Therapy
- Visual Field Analysis

Evidence Review

N/A

References


**History**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/10/14</td>
<td>New policy. Add to Mental Health section. Considered medically necessary when criteria are met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/10/15</td>
<td>Annual Review. Policy Guidelines section updated with clarifying language to indicate that, when deemed appropriate, functional analysis re-assessments are generally conducted once every 6 to 12 months. Benefit Application section updated to specify covered services for ABA for Autism Spectrum Disorders are those which are represented by those codes listed within the Coding section, unless otherwise directed by specific health stipulations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/14/15</td>
<td>Interim Update. Policy section updated with an additionally not medically necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/13/15</td>
<td>Interim Update. Policy statement updated to indicate “lead therapist, or supervising clinician” as an option to a program manager in facilitating this service, when provided in conjunction with a therapists or therapist assistant. Clarification made to the meaning of a “Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)” and variance of state licensure requirements within the Policy Guidelines. “Multiple family group therapy” added to the list of items outside of the scope of ABA services referenced in the Benefit Application section, ICD-9 and ICD-10 codes added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/01/16</td>
<td>Annual Review, approved March 8, 2016. Policy updated within the Policy Guidelines and Benefit application section to address services provided in the school setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/01/16</td>
<td>Interim Update, approved June 14, 2016. Policy Guidelines section updated to indicate that any provider with appropriate training in behavior analysis, or whose scope of licensure includes behavior analysis, is a qualified ABA provider. Benefit application section updated to indicate that direct service provision by telehealth modalities is considered to be not medically necessary due to lack of credible scientific evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/01/16</td>
<td>Interim Update, approved August 9, 2016. Update to Policy Guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/01/16</td>
<td>Interim Review, approved November 8, 2016. Updated policy statement with clarifying language. Updated Benefit application section with telehealth criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/01/17</td>
<td>Interim Review, approved December 13, 2016. Clarification made to the Policy Statement on comprehensive assessment. Updated the language in the Policy Guidelines. Added codes S5108, S5109, S5110, S5111. Updated Benefit Application criteria to clarify services not listed in the coding section aren’t covered services for ABA for Autism Spectrum Disorders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/01/17</td>
<td>Interim Review, approved March 14, 2017. Added coverage criteria clarifications to Benefit Application section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/01/17</td>
<td>Interim Review, approved May 23, 2017. Policy moved into new format. Added note that supervision of ABA must be provided by licensed behavior analysts in states in which require that. Added statements that providing two different types of treatment (ABA and non-ABA) simultaneously is not medically necessary, and providing ABA treatment to more than one patient simultaneously (except for social skills groups) is not medically necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/01/17</td>
<td>Interim Review, approved July 25, 2017. Clarifications made to policy statement. Added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/01/17</td>
<td>Interim Review approved September 5, 2017. Minor addition in the Applied Behavior Analysis section to allow for coverage of supervision conducted by Licensed Assistant Behavior Analysts in states in which that function is within their legally-permitted scope of practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/01/17</td>
<td>Interim Review, approved November 9, 2017. Clarification added regarding services not utilizing applied behavioral analysis techniques; they are either contract exclusions or not medically necessary depending on the member’s contract language. Also added clarification regarding school and school programs; these are not covered parts of ABA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/01/18</td>
<td>Interim Review, approved February 27, 2018. Added clarification regarding when individual treatment can be covered in a group setting. Also added clarification regarding what is not covered for schools. Clarified BCaBAs criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/01/18</td>
<td>Annual Review, approved October 26, 2018. No changes to policy statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/01/19</td>
<td>Annual Review, approved October 4, 2019. Literature review through September 2019, no changes to policy statements. Added CPT codes 97151, 97153, 97154, 97155, 97156, and 97158.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Disclaimer:** This medical policy is a guide in evaluating the medical necessity of a particular service or treatment. The Company adopts policies after careful review of published peer-reviewed scientific literature, national guidelines and local standards of practice. Since medical technology is constantly changing, the Company reserves the right to review and update policies as appropriate. Member contracts differ in their benefits. Always consult the member benefit booklet or contact a customer service representative to determine whether there are any benefit limitations applicable to this service or supply. This medical policy does not apply to Medicare Advantage.

**Scope:** Medical policies are systematically developed guidelines that serve as a resource for Company staff when determining coverage for specific medical procedures, drugs or devices. Coverage for medical services is subject to the limits and conditions of the member benefit plan. Members and their providers should consult the member benefit booklet or contact a customer service representative to determine whether there are any benefit limitations applicable to this service or supply. This medical policy does not apply to Medicare Advantage.
Discrimination is Against the Law

Premera Blue Cross complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Premera does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Premera:
- Provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
  - Qualified sign language interpreters
  - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
  - Qualified interpreters
  - Information written in other languages

If you need these services, contact the Civil Rights Coordinator.

If you believe that Premera has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with:

Civil Rights Coordinator - Complaints and Appeals
PO Box 91102, Seattle, WA 98111
Toll free 855-332-4535, Fax 425-918-5592, TTY 800-842-5357
Email AppealsDepartmentInquiries@Premera.com

You can also file a grievance in person or by mail, fax, or email. If you need help filing a grievance, the Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf, or by mail or phone at:
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue SW, Room S09F, HHH Building
Washington, D.C. 20201, 1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD)

Getting Help in Other Languages

This Notice has Important Information. This notice may have important information about your application or coverage through Premera Blue Cross. There may be key dates in this notice. You must take action by certain deadlines to keep your health coverage or help with costs. You have the right to get this information and help in your language at no cost.

Call 800-722-1471 (TTY: 800-842-5357).

Oromo (Cushite):

Français (French):
Appelez le 800-722-1471 (TTY: 800-842-5357).

Kreyòl ayisyen (Creole):
Avi sila a gen Enfòmasyon Enpòtan ladan. Avi sila a kapab genyen enfòmasyon enpòtan kòsisnan aplikasyon w lan oswa kòsisna kouvèt. Asisins lan atraves Premera Blue Cross. Kapab genyen dat ki enpòtan nan av si a. Ou ka gen pou pran kék aksyon av an sèten dat limit pou ka renbe kouvèt asisins sante w la oswa pou yo ka ede w avek depans yo. Se dwa w pou resewa enfòmasyon sa a ak asisins nan lang ou paiale a, san ou pa gen pou peye pou sa. Rate nan 800-722-1471 (TTY: 800-842-5357).

Deutsche (German):

Hmoob (Hmong):

Ilokano (Ilocano):
Daytoy a Pakdaar ket naglao nit Napateg nga Impormasion. Daytoy a pakdaar mabalin nga adda ket naglao nit napateg nga impormasion maipanggep iti aplikasyonowo yowo coverage babaen iti Premera Blue Cross. Daytoy ket mabalin dagiti importante a pelta iti daytoy a pakdaar. Mabalin nga adda rumbeng nga aramidenyowe nga addang sakbay dagiti partikular a naituding nga adda tidaw tapo napatalaginaya niqyo coverage ni salun-ayyo niqyo tungon kadagiti gastos. Adda karbenganyo a mangala iti daytoy nga impormasion ken tungon iti buadyo a pagsasao nga awan ti bayadanyo. Tumawag iti numero nga 800-722-1471 (TTY: 800-842-5357).

Italiano (Italian):
Questo avviso contiene informazioni importanti. Questo avviso può contenere informazioni importanti sulla tua domanda o copertura attraverso Premera Blue Cross. Potrebbero esserci date chiave in questo avviso. Potrebbe essere necessario un tuo intervento entro una scadenza determinata per consentirti di mantenere la tua copertura o sovvenzione. Hai il diritto di ottenere queste informazioni e assistenza nella tua lingua gratuitamente.
Chiama 800-722-1471 (TTY: 800-842-5357).

中文 (Chinese):
本通知有重要的訊息。本通知可能有關於您透過 Premera Blue Cross 提交的申請或保險的重要訊息。本通知可能有重要的日期。您可能需要在截止日期之前採取行動，以保留您的健康保險或者費用補貼。您有權利免費以您的母語得到本訊息和幫助。請撥電話 800-722-1471 (TTY: 800-842-5357).
Thai (Thai): ประกาศนี้เป็นสาระสำคัญ ประกาศนี้มีความสำคัญที่กำหนดให้ปฏิบัติตามข้อห้ามเกี่ยวกับการใช้เครื่องมือของ Premera Blue Cross และการใช้เครื่องมือในสถานที่ที่มีคำสั่งของผู้พิทักษ์การใช้เครื่องมือที่มีอันตรายไม่ว่าจะเป็นวิธีใดๆ ของ Premera Blue Cross.

Vietnamese (Tiếng Việt): Thông báo này cũng cung cấp thông tin quan trọng. Thông báo này có thể có thông tin quan trọng về đơn xin tham gia hoặc hoàn đơn bảo hiểm của quý vị qua quỹ của chúng tôi. Xin xem ngại quan trọng trong thông báo này. Quý vị có thể xem các thông tin chi tiết thông báo này trên trang web của Premera Blue Cross. Xin vui lòng đọc kỹ thông tin này và đọc kỹ hướng dẫn chi tiết của chúng tôi. Xin vui lòng đọc kỹ thông tin này và đọc kỹ hướng dẫn chi tiết của chúng tôi.