

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services

March 2022

“Autism Treatment Services” are now “Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services”

The Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division has made changes to Autism Treatment Services, including renaming the program to “Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services”.

Autism Treatment Services have been part of the Medicaid benefit package since 2017.

Beginning in 2020, DDP began working on changes to the program in order to increase the number of people eligible for these services.

Additional changes were made based on provider feedback. These changes were made to make the program more flexible and allow people to receive the services earlier.

What are Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services?

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is a type of therapy that can improve social, communication, and learning skills through positive reinforcement. This therapy is provided by a licensed Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

What are Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services?

ASSESSMENT

Assessment consists of the BCBA getting information about the person by completing observations and administering different types of tests to understand the person's skills and preferences.

Assessment takes place when ABA services are first started and is an ongoing process, tracking the person's progress and changes in skills.

Information on family skills and preferences may also be gathered to understand how to best help the family in learning skills to support the person receiving ABA services.

Once the initial assessment phase is completed the BCBA uses the information gathered to create a **Treatment Plan**.

What are Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services?

TREATMENT

The **Treatment Plan** has goals based on the age and abilities of the person to help them become more independent and successful in the short term and into the future.

Goals are broken down into smaller, teachable steps and may include many different skill areas, such as:

- Communication and Language
- Social Skills
- Self Care (for example toileting, showering, and dressing)
- Play and leisure
- Motor skills (how we move our big and small muscles)
- Learning and academic skills

The **Treatment Plan** may also include family goals so family members can learn how to better support the person receiving ABA services.

What are Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services?

DELIVERY

ABA Services occur face-to-face and may be delivered to the person in the:

- home,
- community, or
- clinical (BCBA's office) setting.

Services may also be delivered to:

- Two or more people at the same time, or
- Multiple people receiving ABA services in a group setting.

The BCBA may also discuss the person's treatment plan or provide instruction to:

- The parent, guardian, or caregivers, or
- Multiple sets of parents, guardians, or caregivers at the same time.

Who Provides Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services?

The **BCBA** is a professional who has a Master's level degree, has completed required clinical hours, and has passed the Board Certification Exam through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. The BCBA creates, maintains and updates all treatment plans for eligible participants, and provides supervision to the BCaBA and Technician.

Who Provides Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services?

The Board-Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (**BCaBA**) works under the supervision of the BCBA and may supervise the Technician but may not practice independently. The BCaBA may recommend changes to the person's treatment plan but will need final approval from the BCBA. A BCaBA has a Bachelor's level degree, has completed required clinical hours, and has passed the Assistant Board Certification Exam through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board.

Who Provides Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services?

The **Technician** may also be referred to as a behavior therapist. This is the person most commonly working directly with the person on a regular basis. The Technician is supervised by the BCaBA or BCBA to ensure all protocols or programs contained in the treatment plan are delivered as intended. A Technician has at least a High School diploma or equivalent, 40 hours of training, and has passed the Registered Behavior Technician Exam through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board.

Expanded Eligibility for ABA Services

ABA services have been available to people who are Medicaid eligible with a diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and no older than age 20.

ABA services may now also be available for people who are Medicaid eligible and:

- Were already found eligible for the Developmental Disabilities Program and are no older than age of 20; or
- Have a qualifying mental health diagnosis* and are no older than age 17, or no older than age 20 and enrolled in a high school program.

*these are listed in the ABA Services Manual and are called "Serious Emotional Disturbance" or SED

Getting People Services More Quickly

No Prior Authorization is required for the first 180 calendar days (approximately 6 months) or 1260 units (approximately 84 hours) of service. Services are delivered and billed in 15-minute units.

Any physician, licensed mental health professional, or other qualified healthcare professional can make a *provisional* mental health or Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis for the first 180 calendar days of service.

The person must also meet Functional Impairment Criteria. Functional Impairment Criteria means the person being referred is significantly impaired in multiple areas of their life by their condition.

Additional Applied Behavior Analysis Services Changes

- Services can now be provided in the office, home or community setting.
- The parent or guardian/caregiver will not be required to be present for treatment, except for services that are specifically for parent or caregiver training.
- BCBA's can use assessments that they feel are best for the person they are working with.
- BCBA's now have a 'package' of units to use across services as they see fit.
- Services can now be delivered in groups as well as to individuals.

Getting Started with ABA Services

- The first step is to identify a BCBA to work with. You can find a BCBA in your area through the:
 - Licensed BCBA query [DLI Record Search \(mt.gov\)](https://www.mt.gov)
 - Licensing Board/Program [Board of Psychologist](#)
 - License Type [Behavioral Analyst License](#)
 - Or
 - MPATH Provider Directory: [Provider Directory | OMMS Portal \(optum.com\)](#)
 - Category [Behavioral Health & Social Service Providers](#)
 - Specialty [Behavior Analyst](#)

Getting Started with ABA Services

- The BCBA will submit a form to let the Department know that they are starting ABA services.
- The BCBA will gather necessary paperwork and will begin doing assessments.
- The BCBA will develop the treatment plan within 30 days.
- The BCBA has an initial package of units to use within 180 calendar days*.

*If the BCBA runs out of units, there is a process to request more

Continuing ABA Services

Authorization Is Required For *Continued* ABA services

To continue ABA services after the initial 180 calendar days or package of units is used, whichever is first, the BCBA will need to make sure an evaluation done by a doctor, psychologist, or nurse practitioner who has expertise in this area that makes the diagnosis which qualifies the person for the services such as:

- Child and adolescent psychiatrist
- General psychiatrist with adequate child and adolescent experience
- Psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner with adequate child and adolescent experience
- Developmental pediatrician
- Neuropsychologist or psychologist

Authorization Is Required For *Continued* ABA services

In addition to the diagnosis being confirmed, other information such as documentation that the person is showing progress from the treatment and the BCBA expects additional progress if services continue will be required.

ABA service providers will be required to complete the authorization process every 180 calendar days or 1,260 units of service, whichever is used up first.

Authorization Decisions

The reviewer will look at the information and will decide either:

- The information submitted is incomplete or does not support the need for additional units of service and therefore the reviewer denies the request.
- The information submitted supports the need for additional units of service and the reviewer approves the request.

The reviewer will notify the BCBA provider of the determination and if denied, will explain why the request was denied.

New Montana Medicaid ABA Provider Web Page

The Medicaid Providers Website contains resources for ABA providers:

- ❖ Provider Manuals
- ❖ Links to the Medicaid Provider Rules
- ❖ Fee Schedules and Provider Notices
- ❖ Forms

<https://medicaidprovider.mt.gov/76>

Additional Information

- Information regarding State Plan Amendments and public comments can be found at: [Administrative Rules \(mt.gov\)](#)
- Any questions, please contact ddpservicerequest@mt.gov