

Applied behavioral analysis (ABA) is a type of therapy that can improve social, communication, and learning skills through positive reinforcement. Many experts consider ABA to be the gold-standard treatment for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other developmental conditions, but it can be used in the treatment of other conditions as well.

The Developmental Disabilities Program is proposing the following changes to the Autism State Plan and ABA services in an effort to expand access to and reduce delay in receiving these vital services.

- 1. Current practice:** ABA services are provided to Medicaid eligible members, up to age 21, with a diagnosis of ASD.

Proposed Change: Expand services to also include Medicaid Members, up to age 21, with a primary Mental Health condition or a diagnosis of Intellectual Disability (defined as having been determined eligible for the Developmental Disabilities Program).
- 2. Current Practice:** A Medicaid member must have been diagnosed with ASD by a physician or psychiatrist prior to receiving ABA services under the Autism State Plan.

Proposed Change: A member may begin receiving ABA services under a diagnosis that the ABA service provider feels will qualify for the program. It is important to note though that the qualifying diagnosis must be confirmed by a professional with expertise in the diagnostic area for continued ABA services after the initial 6 months and/or service units package has been used.
- 3. Current Practice:** All ABA services must be prior authorized by the Department prior to a member receiving any services by a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

Proposed Change: No Prior Authorization will be needed before a member can begin receiving ABA services.
- 4. Current Practice:** Only a certain number of service units under each billable code are allowed within the authorized period of 6 months.

Proposed Change: A package of 1,260 service units (each unit = 15 min.) to be used over 6 months will be available to the member before any authorization is required. These units are applied to an expanded list of billable codes and may be used as the ABA service provider sees fit to meet the needs of the individual member. Additional service units in packages of 1,260 may be authorized before the 6 month time period is up if the all the units have been used and the member needs continued services.
- 5. Current Practice:** ABA treatment must be provided in the home setting or other community settings that are a part of the member's typical day and parents or caregivers must always be present and actively participating.

Proposed Change: The caregiver or parent will not be required to be present or participating in all treatment received by the member, though it will still be encouraged, and services can be provided in whatever setting the ABA provider feels is appropriate.
- 6. Current Practice:** Vineland testing and scores are required for access to services.

Proposed Change: BCBA's may now choose the assessment tool they feel is most useful and beneficial in measuring and tracking a member's progress.