



6.21 Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is an evidence-based treatment for individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It includes behavioral techniques to increase pro-social behaviors such as communication, and reduce behaviors that may be harmful or interfere with the development and maintenance of social interactions or behaviors that may be harmful to self or others. In-home, clinic-based and community are all acceptable settings for ABA services to be delivered.

The following ABA services will be available to eligible children/adolescents with ASD as outlined in COMAR 10.09.28:

- **ABA Assessment/Reassessment:** During the assessment or reassessment there is an evaluation of the participant's current level of functioning, skills deficits, and maladaptive behaviors using validated instruments; a treatment plan is also developed. The assessments and reassessments are administered to a child/adolescent by an ABA provider (licensed psychologist, BCBA-D or BCBA).
- **ABA Therapy:** ABA therapy involves behavioral interventions performed by an RBT or BCaBA. A licensed Psychologist, BCBA-D or BCBA develops the interventions and provides direct supervision during a portion of the treatment. Guidelines require the amount of supervision be at least 10 percent of the total amount of hours that direct ABA therapy is delivered. ABA therapy may be delivered as:
 - Individual therapy administered face to face to a child/adolescent by an ABA provider (licensed psychologist, BCBA-D, BCBA, BCaBA, or RBT)
 - Group therapy administered to multiple children/adolescents by an ABA provider (licensed psychologist, BCBA-D, BCBA, BCaBA, or RBT)
 - Social skills group therapy administered to multiple children/adolescents by an ABA provider (licensed psychologist, BCBA-D or BCBA)
- **ABA Parent Training:** ABA parent training is behavior treatment guidance that is provided face-to-face with a participant's parent or caregiver, with or without the presence of the participant. During parent training there is an identification of maladaptive behaviors and skills deficits followed by instructions to the parent or caregiver on how to utilize ABA treatments to reduce maladaptive behaviors and skill deficits. ABA parent training may be delivered as:
 - Individual parent training administered by an ABA provider (licensed psychologist, BCBA-D, BCBA or BCaBA)

- Multiple-family group training administered by an ABA provider (licensed psychologist, BCBA-D or BCBA)

SERVICE RULES

Applied Behavior Analysis

Clinical information that outlines medical necessity is required to support the need for initial and continuing ABA services, including:

- ASD diagnosis confirmation documented by ONE of the following:
 - A comprehensive diagnostic evaluation (CDE) completed within the last 3 years confirming an ASD diagnosis and a referral outlining the need for ABA services written within the last 6 months by one of the following qualified health care professionals (QHCP):
 - Pediatricians
 - Developmental Pediatricians
 - Pediatric Neurologists
 - Child Psychiatrists
 - Clinical Psychologists
 - Nurse Practitioners
 - Neuropsychologists

OR

- A CDE completed more than 3 years ago accompanied by a current Optum Maryland form: Clinical Confirmation of Continued Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis

OR

- A diagnostic report completed by a non-QHCP (i.e., school psychologist or speech language pathologist) within the last 3 years accompanied by the Optum Maryland form: Physician Confirmation of Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis

The provider may not bill the program for ABA services that are provided in or in the context of:

- A hospital or an institution
- A residential setting
- Nonconventional settings such as camp, spas or resorts
- Respite services
- Custodial care
- Services that duplicate a service that the participant is receiving in another medical care program and/or educational setting
- Services that are vocationally or recreationally based
- Services not completed in person (i.e., services rendered by telephone)
- Provider completion of forms or reports

- Activities beyond the provider's scope of practice
- Services rendered but not documented in accordance with COMAR 10.09.28.04
- Travel to and from site of service
- Broken or missed appointments
- Rendering services when measurable functional improvement or continued clinical benefit is not evident, and/or treatment is not deemed necessary
- ABA services not preauthorized by Optum Maryland

Relevant limitations of service are listed in COMAR 10.09.28.05.

Relevant information related to Coordination of Benefits can be found at <https://maryland.optum.com/content/dam/ops-maryland/documents/autism/Combination-of-Services-Rules-Updated-01-01-2019.pdf>.

PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

To qualify for ABA services, a participant must have Medicaid, be less than 21 years old, live in the community, exhibit the presence of maladaptive behaviors or developmental deficits that significantly interfere with home, school, or community activities, and be medically stable. The participant must have a diagnosis of ASD confirmed by a QHCP following the above outlined service rules.

PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY

All ABA providers must have a National Provider Identification (NPI), be enrolled as a Maryland Medicaid provider and meet all necessary provider qualifications and conditions for participation as set forth in COMAR 10.09.36.03 and outlined per COMAR 10.09.28. In addition to being an ABA provider, the provider shall be licensed, certified, or otherwise legally authorized to provide ABA services in the jurisdiction in which the services are provided and may not have current disciplinary actions or sanctions against their license.

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst/Board Certified Behavior Analyst - Doctoral (BCBA/BCBA-D) rendering ABA services requires current certification through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) and must be licensed by the state of Maryland Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists.

A Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) rendering ABA services must have current certification through the BACB, work under the supervision of a licensed psychologist, BCBA-D, or BCBA and have the supervisory relationship documented in writing.

A Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) rendering ABA services must be 18 years or older, have a high school degree or national equivalent, and be registered by the BACB. They must work under the supervision of a licensed psychologist, BCBA-D, or BCBA and have the supervisory relationship documented in writing.

COMBINATION OF SERVICES

Relevant limitations are listed in COMAR 10.09.28. For more information on the combination of services, please see the Optum Maryland website at <https://maryland.optum.com/content/dam/ops-maryland/documents/autism/Combination-of-Services-Rules-Updated-01-01-2019.pdf>.

AUTHORIZATION PROCESS

All ABA services require preauthorization. Preauthorization requests should be submitted through the Incedo Provider Portal with all necessary supporting documents attached to the initial service request. After the initial request has been preauthorized, the provider has 60 days to complete the initial assessment and develop a treatment plan.

Once the initial assessment is completed, the provider is required to submit a request for treatment, including treatment plan documentation, via the Incedo Provider Portal. Ongoing ABA service authorization requests must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the treatment preauthorization expiration. All preauthorization requests are subject to a peer review process. In the event that any clarification or changes are needed, this will be communicated via email and/or telephone to the requesting provider. Updated documents will be required prior to continued ABA treatment being authorized. This includes updated documentation outlining the participant's most current clinical review in the event that a participant's CDE is past three years at the time of continued treatment request. Once all required documents are received by Optum, a determination will be made and will be viewable in the Incedo Provider Portal. This will serve as the provider's preauthorization notification from Optum Maryland.

CLAIMS REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

Claims for preauthorized services may be submitted via the Incedo Provider Portal via batch claims, direct claims submission, paper form, or clearinghouse. Claims submitted with unauthorized service codes or rendering providers not enrolled with Maryland Medicaid will be denied.