

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): Information for Caregivers



DOES MY CHILD QUALIFY FOR ABA THROUGH MEDICAID?

Medicaid rules are different in each state. This means some things may change depending on where you live, such as:

- Which diagnoses are covered.
- Who is allowed to give the diagnosis.
- What tests or tools are used.
- How often the diagnosis must be reviewed.

In most states, Medicaid requires the following to receive ABA:



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



A recommendation for ABA from a doctor or another approved specialist.

WHAT IS ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis, or ABA, is a type of therapy. It helps people learn new skills and reduce behaviors that make daily life harder. ABA focuses on:

- Teaching useful skills.
- Encouraging positive behavior.
- Reducing behaviors that get in the way of learning or independence.

ABA can help at home, at school and in the community. ABA does **not** replace school and it is **not** childcare.

IS ABA RIGHT FOR MY CHILD?

ABA can help many people with autism and other learning or behavior challenges. However:

- ABA does not work the same way for everyone.
- Not every child with autism needs ABA.
- The choice should be based on your child's needs, not just the diagnosis.

Every child with autism is different. What helps one child may not help another.

HOW MUCH ABA DOES MY CHILD NEED?

There is no single right amount of ABA.

- The number of hours should match your child's current needs and abilities.
- It should also fit with other services, like school or therapy, and your family's schedule.
- Needs can change over time, so services should be reviewed often.

LEVELS OF CARE

ABA services can be more intense or more limited, based on your child's needs.

Comprehensive ABA (30-40 hours/week): For children who need support in many areas and need help learning many skills.

Focused ABA (10-25 hours per week): For children with fewer needs or with goals in specific areas, like social or job skills.

Consultation or Caregiver Training Only: Parents or caregivers receive training. The child may receive little or no direct ABA therapy.

ABA can be provided one-on-one or in small or larger groups. Services may take place at home, in a clinic, at school or in the community.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF ABA IS WORKING?

Progress looks different for each child. It depends on age, learning style, time in therapy and other needs.

Signs ABA is helping include:

- New skills your child can use.
- Fewer behaviors that make it hard to be safe or independent.
- Skills being used at home, at school and in the community.

If progress is not happening:

- The treatment plan should change.
- The focus or methods may be adjusted.
- Hours may increase or decrease.
- Other services may be added or suggested instead of ABA.

If ABA continues to show little benefit, services may slowly decrease and eventually end.

OTHER SERVICES THAT MAY HELP YOUR CHILD

ABA is only one part of support. Your child may also benefit from:

- Speech therapy.
- Occupational therapy (OT).
- School services, like an IEP or special education.
- Social skills groups.
- Life skills or job training, especially for teens.
- Counseling or talk therapy when appropriate.
- Parent training or family therapy.
- Medication, if recommended by a doctor.



Helping your child thrive with the care they need.

REDUCING OR ENDING ABA

ABA is not meant to be intense forever.

- Planning for fewer services should start early.
- As your child makes progress, hours may be reduced.
- The goal is to move to less support when your child is ready.

Your child should be able to use their skills outside of ABA, such as at home or school. Decisions should be based on real-life progress, not just time in therapy.

WHO PROVIDES ABA?

ABA services are usually provided by:

- A Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)
- Supervised by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)

Supervision is required to make sure:

- Your child is making progress.
- Goals and strategies are working.
- Therapy is done correctly.



CAREGIVER AND PARENT TRAINING

You are a key part of your child's success.

- ABA should include regular training for parents or caregivers.
- Training helps you support your child every day.

You may learn how to:

- Encourage positive behavior.
- Teach skills at home.
- Respond to difficult behaviors.
- Prepare your child for new situations.

Training should respect your family's values, culture and schedule.



QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

You should always feel comfortable asking your ABA provider:

- How your child is doing
- What progress is being made
- What your role is
- Whether other services may help

Case managers are available to help you find the best support for your child and your family.