

MEMBER RESOURCE ON APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA) SERVICES

Your child deserves evidence-based care.

Understanding autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), and your child's rights as an AHCCCS member — all in one place.

A NOTE ABOUT THIS UPDATE. As Arizona's Medicaid agency, AHCCCS is required to periodically review and update its policies to ensure members receive clinically appropriate, evidence-based services — and to protect the long-term sustainability of the Medicaid program for all members who depend on it.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIAGNOSIS

What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

ASD is a lifelong developmental condition affecting social communication and behavior.

Symptoms vary widely. Some people need substantial daily support, while others live and work independently without supports. Early intervention leads to better outcomes.

Pediatricians screen for ASD during well-child visits at ages 18- and 24-months, in addition to routine developmental surveillance during well-child visits before and after those ages. If concerns arise, ask for a referral to a diagnostic specialist right away.

COVERAGE ASSURANCE

Is ABA covered by AHCCCS?

Yes. ABA is a covered AHCCCS service for eligible members when medically necessary. AHCCCS also covers complementary services that benefit children with ASD, including Speech Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Family Counseling, Other Behavioral Health Services, Case Management, and for older children, Day Programs and Pre-Employment and Post-Employment Support Services.

CLINICIANS AGREE: ALL CHILDREN NEED UNSTRUCTURED PLAY AND REST

What else does my child need?

In addition to therapies, developmental pediatricians recommend that children with ASD have plenty of time for rest, go to school with their peers, play in an unstructured environment, and spend time with their families. Rest and play are essential to development and growth.

EVIDENCE-BASED TREATMENT

What is Applied Behavior Analysis?

ABA is a scientifically validated therapy that improves social communication and reduces challenging behaviors through positive reinforcement and structured environmental supports. ABA is delivered by a Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA) — graduate-level, board-certified, and independently licensed in Arizona.

ABA is not for everyone, and it's not one-size-fits-all. Goals, intensity, location, and strategies are all tailored to your child's unique needs and family life.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM SERVICES

What does quality ABA look like?

- ✓ Individualized to your child's schedule and goals
- ✓ Home, clinic, school, and/or community settings
- ✓ Focused on skill generalization across environments
- ✓ Routine caregiver training
- ✓ LBA-supervised; and led by certified ABA Technician
- ✓ Regular data-driven progress reviews
- ✓ Families included every step of the way
- ✓ Coordinated with school, PCP, and other providers

ABA Proposed Policy Provisions

AHCCCS QUALITY STANDARDS

How is AHCCCS strengthening ABA quality?

Proposed updates to AMPM Policy 320-S introduce mandatory minimum LBA supervision ratios, background checks and fingerprint clearance for all unlicensed staff, rigorous treatment plan documentation, and required caregiver involvement — ensuring services are evidence-based, safe, and effective. Some of the proposed provisions are summarized in this document. To provide review and feedback on the proposed revisions to the ABA policy, please go to [Public Comment page](#).

GETTING A DIAGNOSIS

How is ASD diagnosed?

A Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation (CDE) must be completed by a qualified clinician — a Psychiatrist, Neurologist, Licensed Psychologist, Developmental Pediatrician, or a Pediatrician with DDD-approved ASD training — using DSM criteria and validated tools such as the ADOS-2 or ADI-R.

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

What is required to receive ABA services?

Prior authorization (PA) must be obtained before ABA services start, and includes a completed ABA assessment, a current treatment plan (dated within 30 days), and documentation of medical necessity. Initial approvals and renewals are granted for up to six months.

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Additional documentation is required for:

- Requests exceeding 25 hrs/week
- Full-time students requesting more than 15 hrs/week

YOUR ROADMAP TO CARE

How do I access ABA services?

1. Qualifying Diagnosis

CDE completed by an approved clinician using DSM criteria.

2. Referral for ABA Assessment

Diagnosing provider or PCP places a referral (valid for 1 year).

3. Multimodal ABA Assessment

A Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA) conducts caregiver interviews, direct observation, skills assessments, and records review.

4. Individualized Treatment Plan

The LBA partners with your family to build a person-centered plan aligned with your child's unique needs and schedule.

Children under age three? Apply for Early Intervention at des.az.gov/AzEIP or call (888) 592-0140 — no referral needed.

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE & ABUSE

How to Report

To report fraud, waste or abuse in Medicaid, please visit:

www.azahcccs.gov/Fraud/ReportFraud

Or contact:

- **Hotline: 888-ITS-NOT-OK (888-487-6686)**
- **Email: AHCCCSfraud@azahcccs.gov**

What to Report

Provider Fraud:

Billing for services not provided, falsifying records, or receiving kickbacks.

Waste / Abuse:

Over-utilization of services or misuse of resources.

Provider Network Changes: If your family has been affected by provider network changes, your health plan is available to ensure continuity of care and help you transition to a new provider. Please contact your health plan to transition. If you encounter issues after engaging with your case manager, feel free to contact AHCCCS at ABAtransitionneeds@azahcccs.gov.

Need help accessing services?

AHCCCS's Clinical Quality Management team is trained to help members navigate their benefits and resolve access concerns. Eligible members should never go without medically necessary care.

CONTACT AHCCCS

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