

A Few Housekeeping Items

- First, we have simultaneous interpretation in both American Sign Language and Spanish
- All participants need to choose whether they want to hear the meeting in English or Spanish
- After we read all these notes, we will turn on interpretation services in Zoom, and you will see an Interpretation button at the bottom of your Zoom window
 - Click that button and then select either English or Spanish
- Finally, select Mute Original Audio from that same menu if you selected Spanish.
- We'll now give everyone a minute to select their preferred language.



ARIZONA

HEALTH CARE COST CONTAINMENT SYSTEM

Welcome

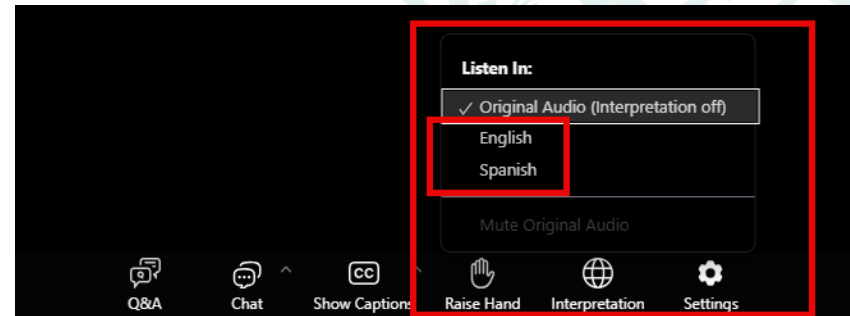
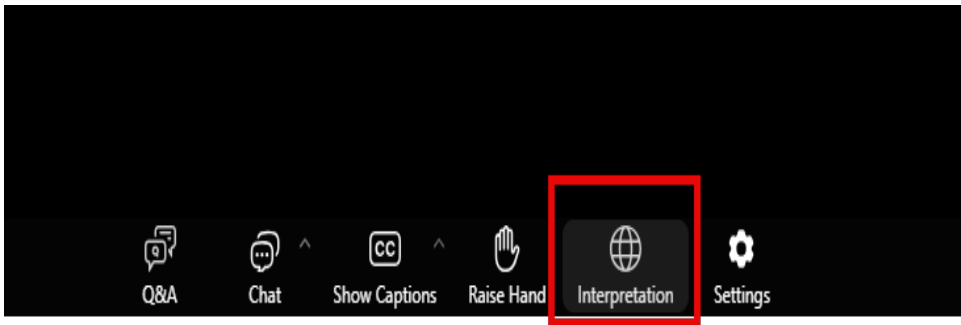
Applied Behavior Analysis
(ABA) Services Updates
(320-S AMPM)

Language Selection

Simultaneous language interpretation is available in Spanish.

All participants must:

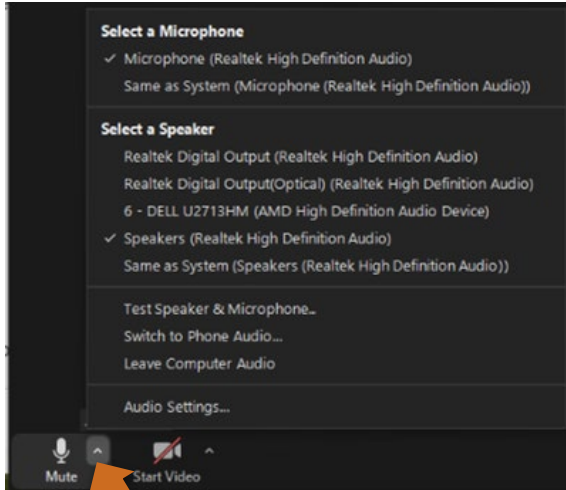
- Click the “Interpretation” button at the bottom of the screen.
- Choose your preferred language, English or Spanish.
- Then select “Mute Original Audio”.



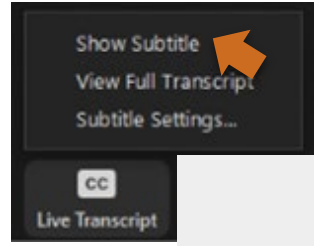
Zoom Webinar Controls

Navigating your bar on the bottom...

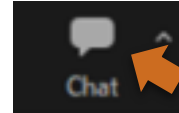
Audio Settings



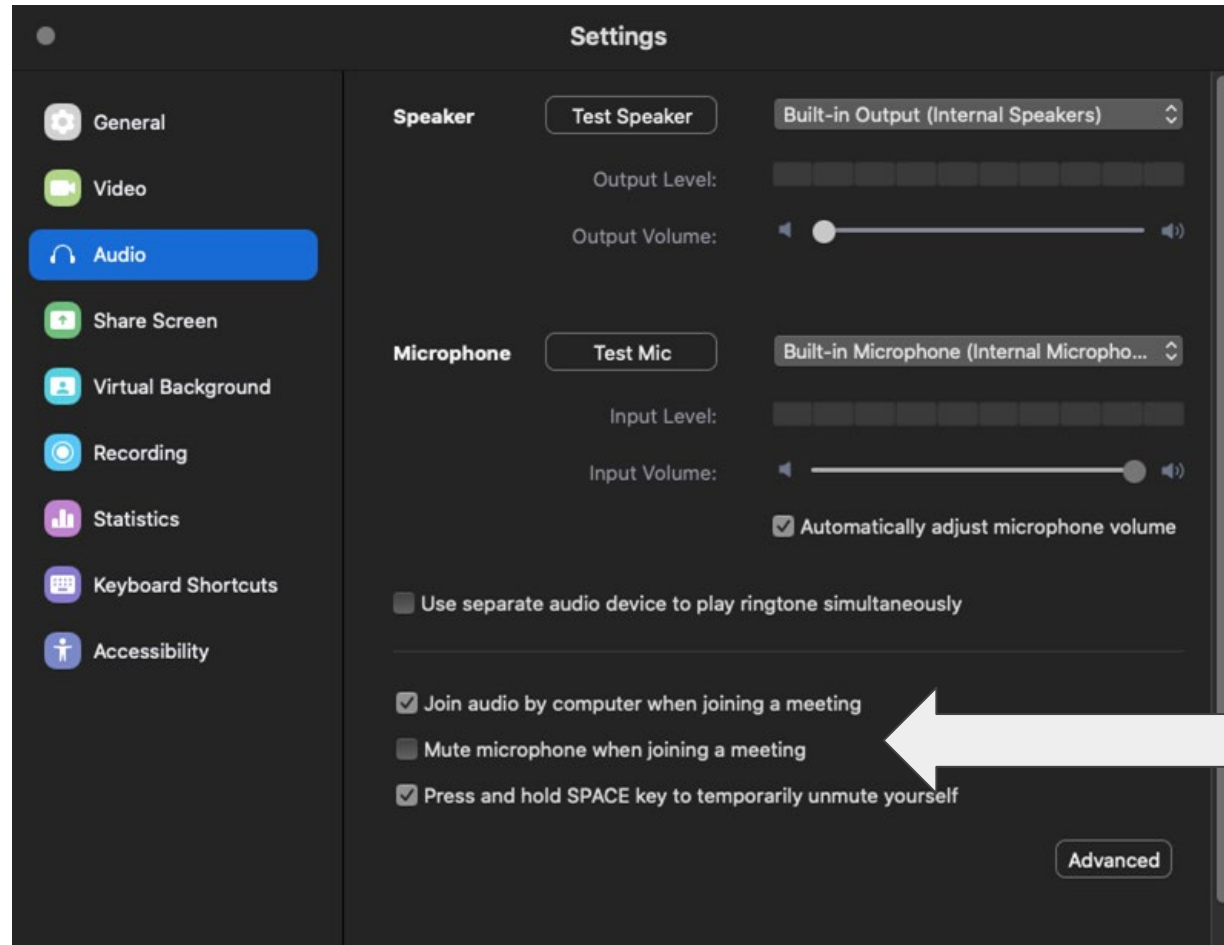
Turn on Closed Captioning



Chat



Audio Settings



The image shows the Zoom application settings window, specifically the Audio section. The left sidebar contains various settings categories: General, Video, Audio (highlighted in blue), Share Screen, Virtual Background, Recording, Statistics, Keyboard Shortcuts, and Accessibility. The main content area is titled 'Settings' and is divided into 'Speaker' and 'Microphone' sections. The Speaker section includes a 'Test Speaker' button, a dropdown menu for 'Built-in Output (Internal Speakers)', an 'Output Level' bar, and an 'Output Volume' slider. The Microphone section includes a 'Test Mic' button, a dropdown menu for 'Built-in Microphone (Internal Micropho...', an 'Input Level' bar, an 'Input Volume' slider, and a checked checkbox for 'Automatically adjust microphone volume'. Below these sections are several checkboxes: 'Use separate audio device to play ringtone simultaneously' (unchecked), 'Join audio by computer when joining a meeting' (checked), 'Mute microphone when joining a meeting' (unchecked), and 'Press and hold SPACE key to temporarily unmute yourself' (checked). A large white arrow points from the right edge of the screen towards the 'Join audio by computer when joining a meeting' checkbox. At the bottom right of the settings area is an 'Advanced' button.

Settings

Speaker Test Speaker Built-in Output (Internal Speakers)

Output Level: [Progress Bar]

Output Volume: [Slider]

Microphone Test Mic Built-in Microphone (Internal Micropho...)

Input Level: [Progress Bar]

Input Volume: [Slider]

Automatically adjust microphone volume

Use separate audio device to play ringtone simultaneously

Join audio by computer when joining a meeting

Mute microphone when joining a meeting

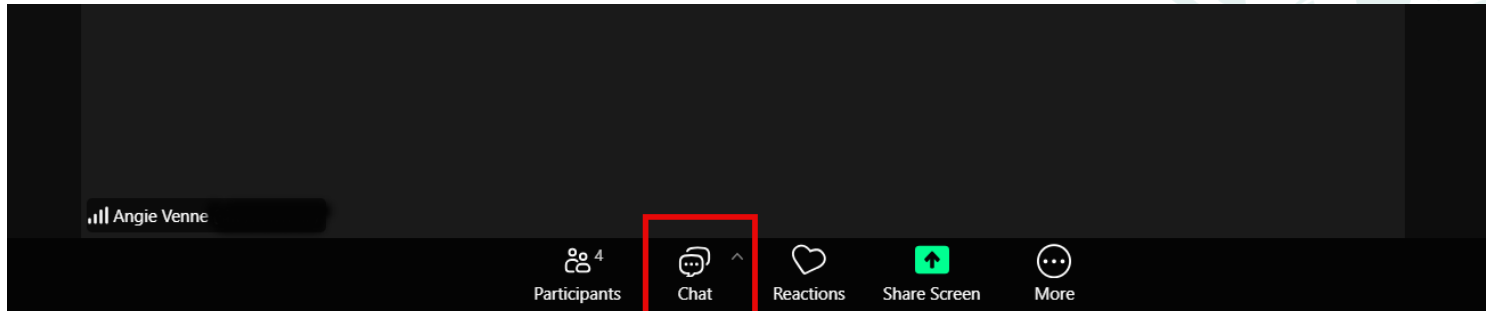
Press and hold SPACE key to temporarily unmute yourself

Advanced

Additional Logistics & Participation Information

- You were automatically muted upon entry
- Please only join by phone or computer
- Please use the Chat feature to submit questions and/or comments so we can ensure they are captured accurately. We will review them at the end of the presentation and address as many as time allows

Thank you!



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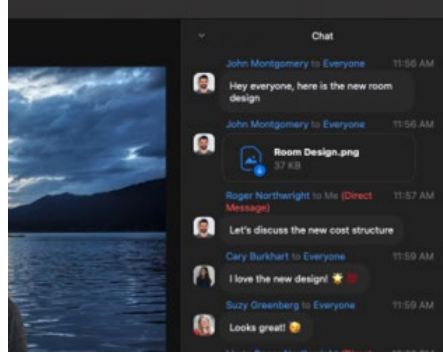
Presione el botón de interpretación en la parte inferior de su pantalla Zoom y después seleccione inglés o español para escuchar la reunión.



Webinar Tips



Limit background noise and distractions if feasible



Use chat feature to ask questions or share resources



This Meeting Is Being Recorded

The recording shall be the sole property of AHCCCS; participation in this meeting indicates your waiver of any and all rights of publicity and privacy.

This recording will be posted to the AHCCCS website after conclusion of this meeting.

Please disconnect from this meeting if you do not agree to these terms.

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The Sunburst logo is a circular emblem on the left side of the slide. It features a central sunburst with various symbols around it, including a fish, a tree, a gear, a hand, and a leaf. The symbols are arranged in a circular pattern, with some pointing outwards and some pointing inwards.

ARIZONA

HEALTH CARE COST CONTAINMENT SYSTEM

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Service Updates (320-S AMPM)

Dr. Theresa Costales, AHCCCS CMO
Dr. Anna Morenz, AHCCCS Medical Director for Clinical Policy &
Special Projects

Topics


Policy Update Goals

Policy Update Process

ABA Model of Care

Proposed Key Policy Updates

Next Steps

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Ground Rules

1. We will review the questions placed in the Chat at the end of the presentation and address as many as we can within the time available.
2. Today's discussion will focus on proposed updates to the **AHCCCS ABA Policy**; other topics are outside the scope of this presentation and will not be discussed.
3. While we're unable to discuss provider network terminations, if your family has been affected by provider network changes, your health plan can help support continuity of care and assist with transitioning to a new provider. If issues remain after working with your health plan case manager, you may contact AHCCCS at **ABATransitionNeeds@azahcccs.gov**

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Definitions

- **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA):** an evidence-based behavioral therapy approach focused on improving social communication skills and reducing challenging behaviors by:
 - Analyzing behaviors,
 - Understanding their triggers and outcomes, and
 - Teaching new, functional skills through positive reinforcement,
 - While implementing and evaluating environmental modifications to produce meaningful changes in behavior.
- ABA first arose as a behavioral approach to help children with autism improve their communication and social skills and has since demonstrated efficacy for some children with other neurodevelopmental disorders, including Intellectual Disabilities.

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Definitions Continued

- **Licensed Behavior Analyst:** Health care professional with a Master's degree in behavior analysis, psychology, education, or related field who possesses national certification and is licensed in Arizona to practice ABA and supervise the work of ABA Trainees, ABA Technicians, and Assistant Behavior Analysts who implement ABA services.
- **ABA Technician:** An unlicensed paraprofessional who implements an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) plan under the close, ongoing supervision of a licensed behavior analyst or assistant behavior analyst

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Definitions Continued

- **Medically necessary services:** Refers to healthcare services needed to diagnose or treat an illness, injury, or disease based on accepted medical standards
 - For Medicaid to cover services, the amount and duration of services must be clinically appropriate and not solely based on the convenience of the provider or patient.

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Definitions Continued

- AHCCCS Medical Policy Manual (AMPM) Policy **320-S** contains provider and contractor requirements for the delivery of ABA services to eligible AHCCCS members
 - **Provider:** A person, institution, or group engaged in the delivery of services, or ordering and referring those services, who has an agreement with AHCCCS to provide services to AHCCCS members.
 - **Contractor:** health plan contracted with AHCCCS to manage the care of enrolled AHCCCS members
 - **Service intensity:** the amount and frequency of services being delivered

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Why Now?

- AMPM Policy **320-S** was last updated in 2020
- AHCCCS received feedback from parents, providers, provider associations, and other stakeholders that additional policy provisions were needed to ensure the **safe** delivery of **high-quality** ABA services to members, while also ensuring services are **medically necessary**
- There has been national attention on ABA services, particularly those paid for by state Medicaid programs, with conversations focused on balancing access to care with the federal Medicaid mandate to ensure services are medically necessary and cost effective

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Goals of ABA Policy Update

Improve outcomes of ABA services by ensuring providers adhere to the evidence-based model of care

Ensure unlicensed staff providing care to vulnerable members are qualified and appropriately supervised by Licensed Behavior Analysts

Inform parent/caregiver expectations of quality ABA services to empower them to properly advocate for their children

Increase coordination of care between service providers to ensure each's members overall needs are considered and addressed

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Policy Update Process

- Clinicians at AHCCCS have conducted reviews of clinical best practice guidelines (including Catalight Practice Guidelines and Council of Autism Service Providers ABA Practice Guidelines), scientific studies, and ABA policies from other state Medicaid agencies to inform policy updates
- We additionally conducted numerous listening sessions and engagements with subject matter experts and key stakeholders from the community - ABA center leaders, public policy leaders, practicing BCBAs, and member advocates

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ABA Model of Care

Diagnosis

- Qualified clinician diagnoses ASD or other Neurodevelopmental Disorder
- Member experiences functional impairments that may be helped with ABA – referral placed for assessment
- Other services may be recommended (speech or occupational therapy, etc)

ABA Assessment

- After interview of caregiver(s), observation of patient, and scoring on assessment tools, Licensed Behavior Analyst determines if ABA is recommended

Treatment Plan

- Creates individualized, measurable goals based on needs identified in the Assessment
- Identifies how progress will be made towards goals

Services Begin

- Typically behavioral interventions are delivered by ABA Technicians supervised by the Licensed Behavior Analyst
- May occur in home, clinic, school, and/or community settings

Evaluation

- ABA providers record client's responses to interventions and progress
- Licensed Behavior Analyst adjusts treatment plan based on this information

Generalization & Maintenance

- Ensure skill transfer outside of treatment to all environments ("generalization") that is maintained after ABA services end

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Proposed Key Policy Updates



Note on Numbers in Proposed Policy

- There are **no hard limitations** on service hours being proposed – all medically necessary services will be authorized.
- There are several situations that would require additional documentation:
 - When **greater than 25 hours of services per week** are being requested, the requesting provider must explain why this service intensity is needed for the member's level of functional impairment.
 - When **greater than 15 hours of services per week are being requested for full-time students (who are in school 30-35 hours/week)**, the provider must explain why this time intensity is needed and how the member will have all of their needs met (including other services, time for free play and rest) while participating in ABA.

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Unlicensed Staff Qualifications and Supervision



Updated Definitions of Unlicensed ABA Staff

- Alignment with national standards
- Standardization across AHCCCS service providers
- Ensures training and credentialing



Establishing New Unlicensed Staff Qualifications

- Fingerprint clearance
- Background & abuse registry checks
- Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) Certification for ABA Technicians



Strengthening Clinical Supervision Requirements

- Requires that the Licensed Behavior Analyst joins and directs a minimum of 1 out of every 10 hours of services delivered by the ABA Technician

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Accessing ABA Services – Diagnosis & Referral

Qualifying Diagnosis Is Needed

- Diagnosis made via a Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation (CDE) completed by a Psychiatrist, Neurologist, Licensed Psychologist, Developmental Pediatrician or Pediatrician with DDD approved ASD diagnosis training

Referral for ABA Assessment Completed

- Diagnosing clinician or primary care provider (PCP) refers for initial ABA Assessment (referral is valid for 1 year)

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Accessing ABA Services – ABA Assessment

ABA Assessment is completed by a Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA) and includes:

- ✓ Caregiver interviews
- ✓ Direct observation
- ✓ Assessments of skills and behaviors
- ✓ Review of history, prior interventions, co-occurring disorders
- ✓ Coordination with other treatment providers

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Accessing ABA Services – Treatment Planning

Treatment Plan completed by the LBA in partnership with the parent/caregiver(s). The plan must:

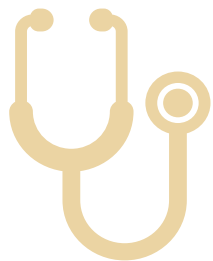
- ✓ Be individualized
- ✓ Be person-centered
- ✓ Align types and amounts of services being requested with the member's needs as described in the ABA Assessment
- ✓ Include a plan for caregiver involvement in treatment
- ✓ Be shared with the referring clinician and other service providers whenever appropriate to support coordination of care

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Accessing ABA Services – Medical Necessity Criteria



Qualifying Diagnoses

Diagnosis must be made by qualified clinician via a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation (CDE)

Qualifying diagnoses include Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and other Neurodevelopmental Disorders



Additional Medical Necessity Criteria

Includes specific functional impairment criteria to ensure treatment being requested is clinically appropriate to meet the member's needs

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Prior and Continued Authorization of Services

Creating Clinician Review Opportunities

- Health plan clinicians with experience in ABA must review the clinical appropriateness of ABA services requested before those services begin and at least every six months afterwards.
- Providers must document the reasons why services are being requested to ensure children and vulnerable adults are receiving the right mix of services to meet their individual needs, and that services provided are effective, leading to improved outcomes.

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Individualized Oversight

- Ongoing oversight ensures providers do not continue services that are not working, and that children have a chance to be children in their community, school, and at home.
- Whether services continue must be decided on an individual basis and focused on achieving positive outcomes.
- Supports members and families' ability to access services in the least restrictive setting, promoting integration within their broader community & school.

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Parent/Caregiver Roles

Parents & Caregivers are an essential part of treatment and should be included in:

ABA Assessment

- Information gathering
- Observation

Treatment Planning

- Progress assessment
- Goal updates

Caregiver Training

- Supporting treatment goals across environments

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Key Take-Aways

The primary goals for the AHCCCS ABA policy revisions being proposed are:

- Ensuring that individuals providing ABA services to vulnerable members are appropriately **trained, supervised, and have undergone fingerprint clearance, and background checks;**
- **Access to care** is maintained and members are not turned away from services if they need greater individualization of services (i.e., accommodation of school, family, or other commitments);
- Members receive **high-quality services that are individualized & achieve positive outcomes.**

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Next Steps

DRAFT Policy updates posted for public comment	April 17, 2026
Public comment period closed	June 2, 2026
AHCCCS review of public comment	June 2-July 9, 2026
Finalize and Publish Policy	Anticipated Late Summer/Early Fall 2026

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AHCCCS Requests Your Input - How to Engage

- Review the draft Policy available the AHCCCS website under the ACOM and AMPM [Policies Under Review](#) and submit Public Comment
- Visit our website and explore the Autism Spectrum Disorder web page: [Resources for Members with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
- Email us at: ABA@azahcccs.gov
 - With questions/concerns
 - With ideas on how to best engage you
- We are exploring additional ways to share information and address comment questions during the public comment period. Details will be shared when available.

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Where Can I Find More Information About Today's Topics?

- This presentation and recording will be posted to the AHCCCS website on the Autism Spectrum Disorder web page: [Resources for Members with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
- AHCCCS will post ABA FAQs that include information you heard today on Friday, April 17th
 - You will find the FAQs on the AHCCCS website on the Autism Spectrum Disorder web page: [Resources for Members with Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
 - These will continue to be updated

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Review of Chat Messages

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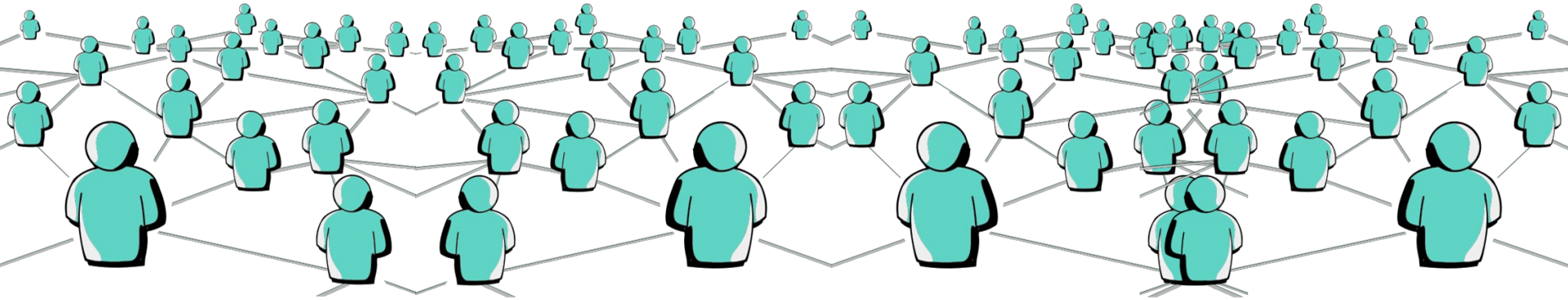
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Learn about AHCCCS' Medicaid Program on YouTube!

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Explains...

Medicaid Eligibility

AHCCCS
Explains...

ALTCS

AHCCCS
Explains...

Health-e-Arizona Plus



Watch our Playlist:

[Meet Arizona's Innovative Medicaid Program](#)

Other Resources & References

1. The Social Security Act (SSA) Sec. 1905(a)(4)(B), 42 CFR 441 Subpart B., and 42 CFR 440.130
2. Social Security Act 1905(a)(4)(B): the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit, where states must cover all medically necessary services for children, including services to address Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and the implementing regulations at 42 CFR 441 Subpart B
3. [AHCCCS ACOM and AMPM Dictionary](#)
4. [Arizona Revised Statute Title 32-2091 Licensing](#)
5. [Arizona Revised Statute Title 32-2091.08 Exemptions from Licensing](#)
6. [Arizona Revised Statutes Title 32 Professional and Occupations](#)
7. [Arizona Revised Statute Title 32-2091.08 Exemptions from Licensing](#)
8. [Section 504 Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)
9. [AHCCCS Covered Behavioral Health Services Guide](#)
10. [AHCCCS Medical Coding Resources](#)
11. [AHCCCS Behavioral Health Services Matrix \(B2 Matrix\)](#)
12. <https://www.casproviders.org/asd-guidelines/>
13. <https://www.catalight.org/clinician-tools/practice-guidelines>



Thank You