



## Applied Behavioral Analysis for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder Frequently Asked Questions

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapy is now a benefit for STAR members. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas (BCBSTX) contracts with a network of ABA providers to offer ABA to STAR members as a covered benefit through Texas Medicaid.

ABA can help children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) develop improved function with their peers and care givers. To qualify for ABA, there is a process of evaluation and testing. This process can be started by speaking to your child's pediatrician. Read on for more information about the ABA therapy benefit.

### **What should I do if I suspect my child has ASD?**

You may be concerned your child is showing signs of ASD. Speak to your child's pediatrician. Your child's pediatrician can perform certain screening tests. These screening tests can help show if your child needs to be referred to a specialist. A specialist can do further testing to see what treatment is best for your child.

### **What is ABA?**

ABA is a type of therapy for behaviors that can be associated with ASD. Children with ASD often have trouble knowing how to express their needs. They can also repeat certain behaviors over and over. These repeated behaviors can include hand flapping or lining up objects. Some of these behaviors can make life function harder for children with ASD. Life function is a child's ability to interact with peers and care givers. ABA can help improve life function skills and overall quality of life for children with ASD. ABA can help reduce behaviors that make life function harder for children with ASD. ABA can also help improve behaviors that help their life function. ABA does not work for all children with ASD. ABA can work better for some children with ASD than others. If your child has ASD, your child's care team can help see if ABA would be right for them.

### **How do I know if ABA is right for my child?**

To qualify for ABA, your child must first have special testing to confirm their diagnosis of ASD. This testing is more thorough than what most pediatricians can do as part of their practice. This testing must be performed by a specialist\*. Your child's pediatrician can help refer your child to the right type of specialist. The specialist will become part of your child's care team\*\*.

If your child's testing shows they have ASD, your child's care team will help decide if ABA is right for your child. For your child to receive ABA, the testing for your child must show the severity of their ASD. The

\*An appropriate specialist can include a developmental pediatrician, a neurologist, a psychiatrist, a licensed psychologist, or an Autism diagnosis team.

\*\*Your child's care team may also include other specialists, such as a social worker, counselor, psychological associate, school psychologist, occupational therapist (OT), and/or a speech-language pathologist (SLP)

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severity helps your child's care team decide how intense their treatment should be. The testing results must also show that your child's care team thinks ABA is right for your child.

### **How do I start ABA services for my child?**

Your child must have testing showing they have ASD. The treatment plan for your child must also show that ABA would be best for your child. Your care team will help find an ABA provider. You can also call the number on the back of your health plan ID card. Your health plan agent can help you find an ABA provider who is part of your health plan. Your care team and health plan will help you find the best ABA provider for your child.

### **Who performs ABA?**

ABA is performed by two types of people: ABA providers and care givers. An ABA provider is a specialist who is trained to provide ABA\*\*\*. The ABA provider only performs ABA for children with ASD. The ABA provider will work closely with the other members of your child's care team. The ABA provider will send reports to your child's care team. The other care team members have a chance to review your child's progress with ABA. This is to ensure your child is getting the proper treatment.

An ABA provider is also trained to teach ABA techniques to the child's care givers. This is because ABA works best when it is done in all a child's living settings. A child's living settings include the home and school settings. This is why the ABA provider also serves as a teacher. ABA providers will teach the child's care givers techniques to do at home. With the ABA provider and the child's care givers working together, ABA has the best chance of success to help a child with ASD.

### **What should I expect once my child's ABA starts?**

Your child's care team and health plan will help refer your child to an ABA provider. Once referred, the ABA provider will conduct a thorough assessment for your child. This is done to see what your child's therapy needs are. The assessment will likely take 2-4 hours. The assessment will likely be scheduled over 1-2 days. The ABA provider will then compose a detailed and comprehensive treatment plan for your child. The treatment plan will include the number of ABA therapy hours for your child.

The treatment plan will have goals for both you and your child. The ABA provider will keep records of treatment. The records will show what progress your child is making with ABA. The records will also include attendance to treatment sessions. Both your child and their care givers must participate in treatment and show progress to continue therapy. The ABA provider will update your child's treatment plan if needed. The treatment plan will be updated 90 days after treatment starts. The treatment plan will be updated again every 180 days after that.

The ABA provider will also have meetings with you and other members of your child's care team. This is to make sure everyone is working together.

There will come a time when ABA will end for your child. The ABA provider will set certain testing scores your child must achieve before ABA ends. This will be part of the overall treatment plan composed by the ABA provider. This will also be discussed fully with you when the treatment plan is made and updated. This is to make sure you understand and agree with the treatment plan.

\*\*\*An ABA provider can be a Licensed Behavior Analysis (LBA), or an LBA who works with a Licensed Assistant Behavior Analyst (LaBA) and/or a Behavior Technician (BT).

**For how long will my child receive ABA services?**

No two child's care needs are the same. Your child's specific care needs will be checked at the start of ABA. Part of this check is seeing how intense your child's ABA needs to be. For some children ABA can last 6 months. For other children ABA can last 3 years or longer. This depends on each child's individual care needs. Once your child's care needs are checked, your child's care team will decide how long ABA will continue for your child. This will be discussed with you when the treatment plan is made.

Your child's needs may also change as ABA goes on. If your child's treatment needs change, this will be approved by you and your child's care team. If ABA needs to last longer than 3 years, your child's diagnosis testing must be done again. This is to make sure ABA is the right treatment for your child. The ABA provider will discuss with you when ABA will end for your child. The ABA provider and the rest of your child's care team will help see what other treatments your child may still need after ABA ends.

If you have questions about ABA services, please call BCBSTX STAR Service Management toll-free at **1-877-214-5630**. Members with hearing or speech loss can call the TTY line at **711**.

If you have any questions about your child's health plan benefits, please call the BCBSTX STAR Customer Advocate department toll-free at, TTY **711**.

Sincerely,

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas

To get auxiliary aids and services, or to get written or oral interpretation to understand the information given to you, including materials in alternative formats such as large print, braille or other languages, please call a BCBSTX STAR Customer Advocate at 1-888-657-6061 (TTY/TDD 7-1-1).

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- Provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us, such as:
  - Qualified sign language interpreters
  - Written information in other formats (large print, audio, accessible electronic formats, other formats)
- Provides free language services to people whose primary language is not English, such as:
  - Qualified interpreters
  - Information written in other languages

If you need these services, contact Civil Rights Coordinator.

If you believe that Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas has failed to provide these services or discriminated in another way on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex, you can file a grievance with: Civil Rights Coordinator, Office of Civil Rights Coordinator, 300 E. Randolph St., 35<sup>th</sup> floor, Chicago, Illinois 60601, 1-855-664-7270, TTY/TDD: 1-855-661-6965, Fax: 1-855-661-6960, [Civilrightscoordinator@hcsc.net](mailto:Civilrightscoordinator@hcsc.net). You can file a grievance in person or by mail, fax, or email. If you need help filing a grievance, Civil Rights Coordinator is available to help you.

You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 509F, HHH Building  
Washington, D.C. 20201

1-800-368-1019, 800-537-7697 (TDD)

Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).

CHÚ Ý: Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).

注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711)。

주의: 한국어를 사용하시는 경우, 언어 지원 서비스를 무료로 이용하실 수 있습니다. 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) 번으로 전화해 주십시오.

ملحوظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اذكر اللغة، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية تتوافر لك بالمجان. اتصل برقم 1-855-710-6984 (رقم هاتف الصم والبكم: 711).

خبردار: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں، تو آپ کو زبان کی مدد کی خدمات مفت میں دستیاب ہیں۔ کال کریں 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).

PAUNAWA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, maaari kang gumamit ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad. Tumawag sa 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).

ATTENTION : Si vous parlez français, des services d'aide linguistique vous sont proposés gratuitement. Appelez le 1-855-710-6984 (ATS: 711).

ध्यान दें: यदि आप हिंदी बोलते हैं तो आपके लिए मुफ्त में भाषा सहायता सेवाएं उपलब्ध हैं। 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) पर कॉल करें।

اب. دشاب یم مهارف امش یارب ناگیار تروص هب ینابز تلایهست، دینک یم وگتفگ یسراف نابز هب رگا: هجوت 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) دیریگب سامت.

ACHTUNG: Wenn Sie Deutsch sprechen, stehen Ihnen kostenlos sprachliche Hilfsdienstleistungen zur Verfügung. Rufnummer: 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).

સુચના: જો તમે ગુજરાતી બોલતા હો, તો નિ:શુલક ભાષા સહાય સેવાઓ તમારા માટે ઉપલબ્ધ છે. ફોન કરો 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).

ВНИМАНИЕ: Если вы говорите на русском языке, то вам доступны бесплатные услуги перевода. Звоните 1-855-710-6984 (телетайп: 711).

注意事項：日本語を話される場合、無料の言語支援をご利用いただけます。1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711) まで、お電話にてご連絡ください。

ໂປດຊາວ: ຖ້າວ່າ ທ່ານເວົ້າພາສາ ລາວ, ການບໍລິການຊ່ວຍເຫຼືອດ້ານພາສາ, ໂດຍບໍ່ເສັຍຄ່າ, ຄມຸນມີຮ່ອມໃຫ້ທ່ານ. ໂທ 1-855-710-6984 (TTY: 711).