

Parent and Caregiver Information Alert - May 2023

Lack of Access to ABA Therapy in Medicaid

Why are Medicaid-eligible children having difficulties accessing ABA therapy¹?

Medicaid coverage for applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy for the treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is still not accessible to most children throughout Illinois' Medicaid health plan. Even though the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) initiated coverage for ABA therapy in October 2020, the coverage has not been accessible due to HFS' practitioner requirements which led to only a very few providers delivering ABA in the entire state.

Currently, what is the main barrier to accessing ABA?

Right now, the main barrier is the HFS staffing requirement that all ABA service providers need to employ a licensed practitioner, such as a psychologist or social worker, to supervise the behavior analyst also known as a BCBA. Behavior analysts are the most common practitioner type in employer-based health and other states' Medicaid coverage that designs, supervises, and implements ABA therapy in treating ASD. They also do not need supervision. Workforce shortages have made finding the licensed professionals HFS requires very difficult, leaving a large number of ABA providers unable to offer services.

Families and caregivers are frustrated, and children are going without ABA services.

Most families have reported frustration with not finding ABA service providers accepting their Medicaid insurance even with having a prescription or recommendation for ABA therapy from their physician or behavioral health professional.

Medicaid-eligible children with ASD have patient protection.

The EPSDT federal mandate covers early, periodic, screening, diagnosis, and treatment and requires the state Medicaid agency to cover and ensure children receive the medically necessary care prescribed by a physician or recommended by a psychologist within a reasonable amount of time.

How can families and caregivers advocate for their children?

Please watch the informational videos on your patient protections and how to file a simple appeal.

Find informational videos on access challenges, patient protections, and filing appeals, including sample templates for appeals, at www.ILASD.com under Medicaid Access.

¹ ABA treatment involves increasing developmental skills and socially appropriate behavior, and reducing problem behavior. The effectiveness of ABA therapy for individuals with ASD is well-documented in research and meets evidence-based best practice standards of the American Medical Association, the US Surgeon General, and American Psychological Association.