

Autism



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NOTE — The revision date appears in the footer of the document.

AUTISM - Guidelines

I. Applied Behavior Analysts (ABA) Provider Network Eligibility & Enrollment

The following provider types may be eligible to enroll as a contracting provider with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas (BCBSKS):

Credentialed Providers

- LBA – Licensed Behavior Analyst
- LaBA – Licensed Assistant Behavior Analyst

Non-Credentialed Providers

- BCBA – Board Certified Behavior Analyst
- BCBA-D – Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Doctorate
- AS – Autism Specialist
- BCaBA – Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst
- RBT – Registered Behavioral Technicians
- IIS – Individual Intensive Support Provider

To determine eligibility, LBA and LaBA provider types will have their license verified on the Kansas Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board (KSBSRB) and must have a CAQH profile completed prior to submitting an enrollment request. The Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) will be queried to verify certification for BCBA-D, BCBA, BCaBA and RBT provider types. Autism Specialist and IIS provider types will submit a letter signed by the KDas HCBS Autism Waiver Program Manager or HCBS Director.

Provider types BCBA-D, BCBA and BCaBA who become licensed with the KSBSRB are asked to notify Provider Network Services (800-432-3587, option three) so that credentialing requirements can be met.

Any change of provider credentials should be immediately communicated to BCBSKS. Email update request and supporting documentation to ProviderNetworkEnrollment@bcbsks.com.

ABA providers interested in enrolling should submit the provider network application available at bcbsks.com to begin the enrollment process.

NOTE – Services provided by tutors, special education teachers and paraprofessionals are not eligible under the Autism benefit.

II. Autism Spectrum Disorders Behavior Therapy Criteria

Lucet's medical policy is used to review and make benefit decisions for ABA service requests for members with the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD is a medical neurobiological and developmental disorder characterized by three core deficit areas: social interactions, social communication and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior. For complete BCBSKS Medical Coverage Criteria and BCBSKS Federal Employee Program Benefit Plan Coverage Criteria, go to LucetHealth.com.

ABA is the behavioral treatment approach most commonly used with children with ASD. Techniques based on ABA include Discrete Trial Training, Incidental Teaching, Pivotal Response Training and Verbal Behavioral Intervention. ABA involves a structured environment, predictable routines, individualized treatment, transition and aftercare planning and significant family involvement. ABA attempts to increase skills related to behavioral deficits and reduce behavioral excesses. Behavioral deficits may occur in the areas of communication, social and adaptive skills, but are possible in other areas as well. Examples of deficits may include a lack of expressive language, inability to request items or actions, limited eye contact with others and inability to engage in age-appropriate self-help skills such as brushing teeth or dressing. Examples of behavioral excesses may include, but are not limited to physical aggression, property destruction, elopement, self-stimulatory behavior, self-injurious behavior and vocal stereotypy.

At an initial evaluation, target symptoms are identified. A treatment plan is developed that identifies the core deficits and aberrant behaviors, and includes designated interventions intended to address these deficits and behaviors and achieve individualized goals. Treatment plans are usually reviewed for medical necessity twice annually – frequency dependent upon the controlling state mandate – to allow re-assessment and to document progress in improving the gap between member's chronological and developmental age.

Coverage Guidelines

Authorization for ASD-related services may only be granted if all the following criteria are met in Lucet's Medical Necessity Criteria, which can be found at LucetHealth.com. For Federal Employee (FEP) members, select the ABA for Treatment of ASD for FEP members criteria, also found at LucetHealth.com.

Refer to the Guidelines for Treatment Record Documentation section of Lucet's Provider Manual for rules on client file documentation.

Lucet will review requests for ABA treatment benefit coverage based upon clinical information submitted by the provider. Clinical information includes submission of the Initial Treatment Plan form – available at ProviderPortal.LucetHealth.com – accompanied by the Diagnostic Evaluation that specifies a diagnosis of ASD and any additional documentation of the member's condition, such as Early Intervention Services, IEP and pertinent medical records. For ABA prior authorization request made by phone, contact 877-563-9347.

Service Intensity Classification

Comprehensive

Comprehensive ABA treatment targets members whose treatment plans address deficits in all core symptoms of Autism. This treatment level – which requires very substantial support – should occur initially in a structured setting with 1:1 staffing and should advance to the least restrictive environment appropriate for the member. This treatment is primarily directed to children ages three to eight years old. Caregiver training is an essential component of Comprehensive ABA treatment. Lucet's medical policy 20.5.005 Applied Behavior Analysis for the Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder page four provides additional information. Comprehensive treatments range from 25 to 40 total hours of direct services weekly, and

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includes ABA delivery from ABA provider directly to individual recipient, caregiver training, case supervision and treatment planning; it may also include ABA services provided in a group setting.

Focused

Focused treatment targets a limited number of behavior goals requiring support of ABA treatment. Behavioral targets include marked deficits in social communication skills and restricted, repetitive behavior such as difficulties coping with change. In cases of specific aberrant and/or restricted, repetitive behaviors, attention to prioritization of skills is necessary to prevent and offset exacerbation of these behaviors and to teach new skill sets. Identified aberrant behaviors should be addressed with specific procedures outlined in a Behavior Intervention Plan. Emphasis is placed on group work and caregiver training to assist the member in developing and enhancing his/her participation in family and community life, and developing appropriate adaptive, social or functional skills in the least restrictive environment.

Focused treatments typically range from 10 to 25 total hours of direct services per week. This treatment may include delivery from ABA provider directly to individual recipient or group of recipients, caregiver training, case supervision and treatment planning.

Hours to be Authorized

Total authorized hours will be determined based on all of the following criteria:

- Lucet medical policy
- Provider treatment plan
- Member's age
- Severity of symptoms, including aberrant behaviors
- Developmental functioning as indicated by psychological testing

Caseload Size

Caseload size for the Behavior Analyst (BCBA/AS) is typically determined by the following factors:

- Complexity and needs of the clients in the caseload
- Total treatment hours delivered to the clients in the caseload
- Total case supervision and clinical direction required by caseload
- Expertise and skills of the Behavior Analyst
- Location and modality of supervision and treatment – for example, center vs. home or individual vs. group
- Availability of support staff for the Behavior Analyst. The recommended caseload range for one Behavior Analyst is as follows:

Supervising Focused Treatment

- Without support of an IIS/BCaBA is 10 to 15
- With support of an IIS/BCaBA is 16 to 24

Supervising Comprehensive Treatment

- Without support of an IIS/BCaBA is six to 12
- With support of an IIS/BCaBA is 12 to 16

Exclusions

The following services have insufficient or no evidence to support efficacy and do not meet medical necessity:

- Services that are purely academic and duplicate or replicate academic learning in a school setting
- Services that are not congruent with this medical policy
- Cognitive Therapy – other than when provided as part of Applied Behavior Analysis services for eligible members or retraining
- Services that address or treat symptoms other than the core symptoms of autism. For this document, the core symptoms of autism are defined as deficits in social communications and social interaction across multiple contexts, and restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests or activities
- Treatment that is considered to be investigational/experimental, including but not limited to Auditory Integration Therapy; Facilitated Communication; Floor Time – Developmental Individual-Difference Relationship-based model; Higashi Schools/Daily Life; Individual Support Program; LEAP; SPELL; Waldon; Hanen; Early Bird; Bright Start; Social Stories; Gentle Teaching; Response Teaching Curriculum and Developmental Intervention Model; Holding Therapy; Movement Therapy; Music Therapy; Pet Therapy; Psychoanalysis; Son-Rise Program; Scotopic Sensitivity training; Sensory Integration training; Neurotherapy – EEG biofeedback; Gluten-free/Casein-free diets; Mega-vitamin Therapy; chelation of heavy metals; Anti-fungal drugs for presumed fungal infection; Secretin administration
- Respite, shadow, para-professional or companion services in any setting
- Personal training or life coaching
- ABA services in residential facilities to replace or augment the internal behavioral health or ABA program
- Custodial care with focus on activities of daily living – bathing, dressing, eating, maintaining personal hygiene, etc. – that do not require the special attention of trained/professional ABA staff
- Any program or service performed in nonconventional settings – even if the services are performed by a licensed provider – including spas/resorts, vocational or recreational settings; Outward Bound and wilderness camp or ranch programs

Exclusion Definitions

Custodial Treatment

1. Non-skilled, personal care – examples include help with activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, eating, getting in or out of a bed or chair, moving around, using the bathroom, preparing special diets and taking medications
2. Care designed for maintaining the safety of the member or anyone else
3. Care with the sole purpose of maintaining and monitoring an established treatment program

Respite Care

Care that provides respite for the individual's family or persons caring for the individual.

Paraprofessional Care

Services provided by unlicensed persons to help maintain behavior programs designed to allow inclusion of members in structured programs or to support independent living goals except as identified in state mandates or benefit provisions.

III. Telehealth/Telemedicine

Telehealth/telemedicine for parent education and direct supervision activities can be covered if allowed as an eligible telehealth/telemedicine service under the member benefit plan. It is recommended that telehealth/telemedicine service delivery be combined with face-to-face service delivery of direct supervision activities.

All telemedicine services should be billed with place of service 02 or 10 and the GT modifier.

For more information, see Policy Memo No. 2, VI. Telemedicine.

IV. General Billing Guidelines

All contracting providers who are defined as eligible providers under the member's BCBSKS contract and who are providing services as defined in their Kansas licensure or certification, shall bill their charges to BCBSKS under their own billing National Provider Identifier (NPI) or specific rendering provider number. For more information, see Policy Memo No. 1.

Session times on claims are recommended to reduce duplicate claim denials.

Concurrent Care

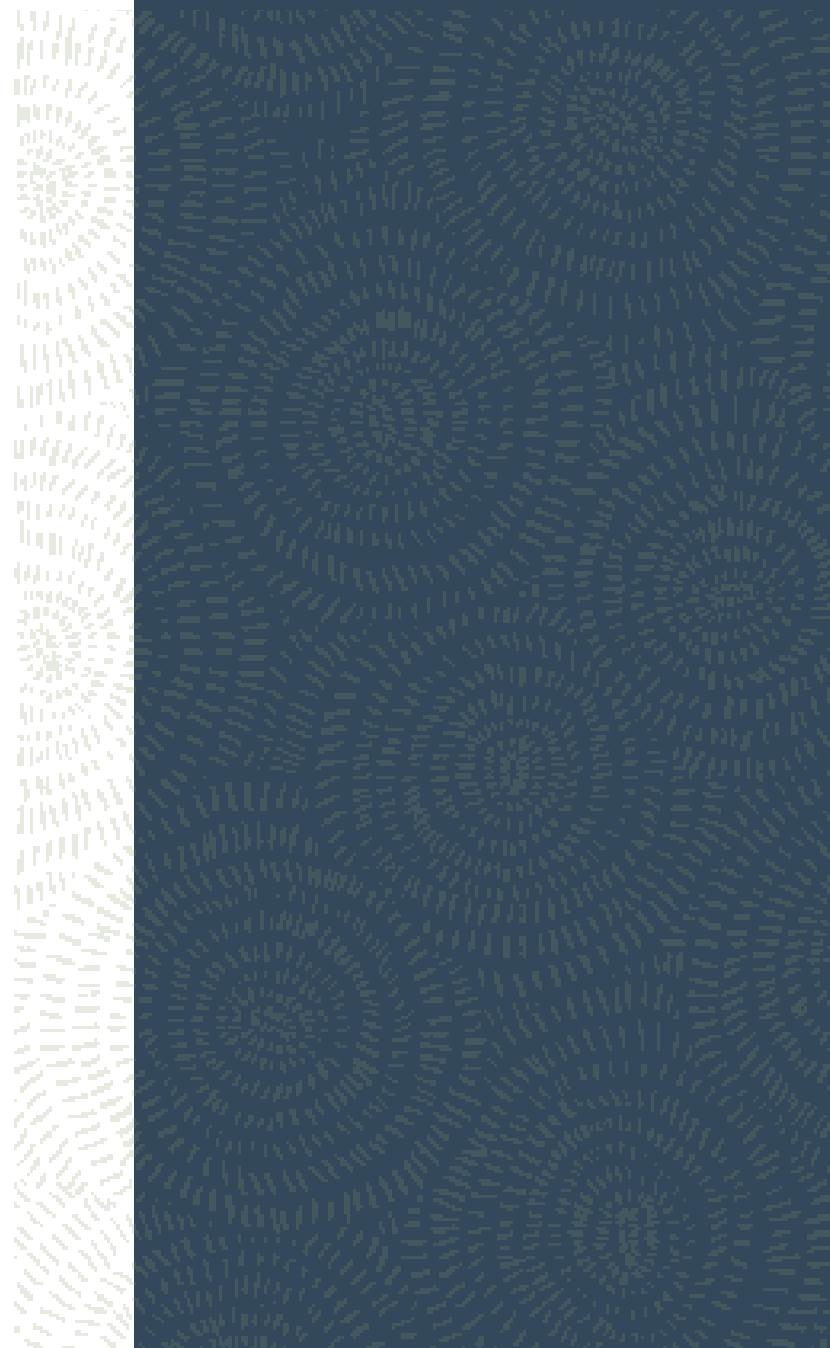
BCBSKS does not allow billing of ABA services concurrently. Only one provider will be reimbursed for overlapping session times.

Autism Coding Guidelines

Note – All ABA codes are billed in 15-minute units. "If the BCBA or other qualified health care professional personally performs the line technician activities, his or her time engaged in these activities should be included as part of the line technicians' time to meet the components of the code." AMA CPT, 2025.

Revisions

01/01/2019	Redesigned manual Pages 12-13 – Added telemedicine information Pages 14-16 – Updated Autism Coding Guidelines
03/01/2021	Page 3 – Updated ABA Provider Network Eligibility and Enrollment.
01/01/2022	Page 4 – Updated ABA Provider Network Eligibility and Enrollment section to reflect current practices Page 9 – Updated General Billing Guidelines Page 9 – Clarified Concurrent Care section Page 10 – Added section IV – General Billing Guidelines
01/01/2023	Page 9 – Clarified Concurrent Care section
01/01/2024	Updated references of New Directions Behavioral Health (NDBH) to Lucet throughout manual Page 3 – Updated where to find coverage criteria under section II Page 9 – Updated Telehealth/Telemedicine section to reflect current guidelines Page 9 – Updated Concurrent Care to reflect updated billing guides
02/13/2024	Page 6 – Added ABA prior authorization phone number
05/07/2024	Page 4 – Updated Coverage Guidelines section to reflect current guidelines Page 4 – Updated Service Intensity Classification to reflect current classifications Page 6 – Updated exclusions list to be current
06/17/2024	Page 4 – Updated Coverage guidelines to reflect current examples Page 8 – Updated Autism Coding Guidelines to link to a perpetually current resource
01/01/2025	Page 3 – Reordered provider types Page 4 – Updated links to Lucet's main resource page, allowing providers to choose their option Page 7 – Updated Section IV General Billing Guidelines, added second paragraph
04/25/2025	Page 4 and 5 – Removed Vineland reference
01/01/2026	Removed links throughout Page 3 – Updated Applied Behavior Analyst (ABA) Provider Network Eligibility and Enrollment section to reflect current procedures and contact information



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