



June 17, 2024

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the Autism Society of Ohio (ASO), we want to bring to your attention that children with Autism are losing time and important behavioral and educational intervention because the State of Ohio has not codified coverage for Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) therapy, an evidence-based prescribed treatment for children with Autism and other developmental disabilities.

*The Autism Society of Ohio is a coalition of the Ohio affiliates of the Autism Society of America and includes: the **Autism Societies of Central Ohio, Greater Akron, Greater Cleveland, Dayton, Mahoning Valley, and Northwest Ohio**. Together, we cover 100% of the state and thousands of individuals and families living with Autism and other developmental disabilities in our communities.*

Families face an array of challenges to gain access to ABA. First, finding a provider that will accept the Managed Care Organization's (MCO) plan and the Medicaid reimbursement rate is difficult; many give up trying. If families find a provider, the next challenge is the denial of claims during the prior authorization process for inconsistent reasons between the seven different ABA medical policies for each MCO. If a provider accepts them, cash flow problems are experienced due to the wide range of claims denied causing untimely reimbursement. Finally, providers are dropping children receiving ABA via Medicaid coverage and/or are closing their doors because of all the problems.

We know it's important to all of us that we support children living with Autism and their families with critically important treatments that improve educational outcomes and skills throughout a child's lifetime. ABA is an important treatment that provides clear evidence of its long-term positive impact, which is why doctors prescribe it at an early age.

We are writing to ask that you please make it a legislative priority to ensure access to ABA by stabilizing Ohio's Medicaid system by enacting an administrative rule that requires the following:

1. The Ohio Department of Medicaid (ODM) to create a uniform medical policy for ABA therapy for treating individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).



2. Permanently recognize Certified Ohio Behavior Analysts (COBA) as Medicaid providers/practitioners in all ODM and Managed Care Organizations (MCO).
3. Increase the reimbursement rate by 15% from the original 2016 rate, often not accepted by ABA providers.
4. Ensure direct treatment staff (or behavior technicians) are billable under Medicaid after completing the national training requirements for certification and being deemed competent by the supervising COBA.
5. Hold the Ohio Department of Medicaid's provider accreditation requirement until after coverage is stabilized.

We urge the Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee to hold an emergency hearing to address the five listed action items and stabilize Ohio's Medicaid system.

If you have any questions or need help from our members, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,
The Autism Society of Ohio

Background: Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. According to the CDC, 1:36 children and over 5.4 million adults live with Autism. Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions that begin during the child's developmental period and typically occur before a child is born. There is often nothing about how people with ASD look that sets them apart from other people, but people with ASD may **communicate, interact, behave, and learn** in ways that are different from most other people. The learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people with ASD can range from gifted to severely challenged.

- 44% of individuals with Autism have an average to above average IQ.
- 38% of individuals diagnosed with Autism have a mild to severe intellectual disability.
- 25-30% of individuals with Autism are nonverbal and may not have a means to communicate.