Applied Behavior Analysis

Humana

Medicaid Medical Coverage Policy

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Description

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is a therapy model based on the science of learning that focuses on understanding how the environment affects behavior. ABA therapy relies on observation and objective assessment of the member's behaviors to understand the important contextual variables that support the individual's problem behaviors. Understanding those events allows the practitioner to aid in developing new skills to replace the problem behaviors. The goal is to support and foster a member's independence and self-determination to the maximum extent possible by applying behavior principles to improve the member's health, safety, and autonomy. This is best accomplished through collaboration with caregivers and other important people in the member's life.

The core characteristics of ABA are as follows:

- Objective assessment and analysis of behavior in its relevant context to understand the reasons for how behavior occurs.
- Treatment based on behavior principles and research findings implemented with consistency and fidelity
- Development of treatment goals based on their importance to the individual to restore best possible functioning fostering independence and promoting autonomy

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- Treatment based on behavior principles and research findings implemented with consistency and fidelity

- Timely data, based decision making based on graphic representations the person's response to treatment

The Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) operates certification programs that credential and recognize practitioners at three levels:

- A **board certified behavior analyst (BCBA)** holds a graduate-level certificate for behavior analysis and is an independent ABA service provider who supervises the work of Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBAs) and Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs).

- A **board certified assistant behavior analyst (BCaBA)** holds an undergraduate-level certification in behavior analysis and provides ABA services under the supervision of a BCBA.

- A **registered behavior technician (RBT)** requires a high school diploma and holds a paraprofessional certification. The RBT provides ABA services under the close supervision and direction of a BCBA or BCaBA.

Coverage Determination

We follow state manual PART 30. APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA) SERVICES, in addition the following criteria apply:

ABA Initial assessment (97151)
Humana members may be eligible under the Plan for up to 24 units (6 hours) for an ABA initial assessment. Request may exceed initial assessment units for complex cases when the exception criteria are met.

ABA Reassessment (97151-TS)
Humana members may be eligible under the Plan for up to 16 units (4 hours) every 6 months for an ABA reassessment. Request may exceed reassessment units for complex cases when the exception criteria are met.

Exception criteria

- Regression or worsening in skills or functioning (not explainable by a lack of effective treatment protocols), demonstrated by:

    - Significant loss of previously acquired developmental, communication or adaptive skills; **OR**

- Rapid deterioration in functioning is attributable to medical, behavioral, environmental or psychosocial factors; **OR**
- Dangerous behaviors; **AND**
- Documentation noting changes to protocol during the authorization period; **OR**

- Presence of comorbid conditions affecting treatment complexity, demonstrated by **BOTH** of the following:
  - Co-occurring medical or behavioral conditions (eg, intellectual or sensory impairments, epilepsy, genetic disorders and/or significant medical concerns) that are mitigating factors and outside the spectrum of diagnosis typically occurring within the ASD spectrum, requiring additional units when the following are noted:
    - Conditions interfering with engagement in treatment; **OR**
    - Conditions requiring specialized protocol development; **OR**
    - Conditions complicating assessment or behavior intervention planning; **AND**
  - Documentation specifying how co-occurring condition is impacting current level of functioning and adds to complexity and how treatment and assessment will address the symptoms; **OR**
- Major treatment changes requiring intensive clinical oversight, demonstrated by **BOTH** of the following:
  - Major changes in treatment or the member's environment requiring substantial clinician involvement, including:
    - Non-typical transitions between settings (home, new school, hospital, foster placement); **OR**
    - Implementation of new behavior intervention plans; **OR**
    - Significant family and/or caregiver changes; **AND**
  - Documentation of changes that are occurring and how it is impacting the member; **OR**
- Severe behaviors that pose safety risks, demonstrated by **BOTH** of the following:
  - Dangerous or high-intensity behaviors, including:
    - Physical aggression, self-injury, elopement or behavior resulting in injury to self or others; **OR**

- Property destruction with safety implications; **OR**
- Behaviors requiring frequent crisis response or risk mitigation; **AND**

  - Documentation providing specific instances and frequency including critical incidents reports or progress notes detailing the incident; **OR**

- Cultural or linguistic barriers necessitating interpreter support, demonstrated by **BOTH** of the following:

  - Language or cultural needs require additional clinical time, such as:
    - Interpreter involvement in treatment sessions or caregiver training; **OR**
    - Modification, translation, or cultural adaptation of treatment materials; **OR**
    - Additional time required to ensure comprehension and effective engagement; **AND**
  - Documentation providing information such as how interpretation services will be used and how daily treatment will be provided in accordance with the member's language needs; **OR**

- Cases requiring coordination across multiple informants or systems, as demonstrated by **BOTH** of the following:

  - Complexity present when member's care requires involvement with:
    - Multiple caregivers (eg, shared custody, foster systems, multi-generational households); **OR**
    - Schools, mental health providers, child welfare, or medical specialists; **OR**
    - Conflicting behavioral reports requiring reconciliation across settings; **AND**
  - Documentation including information regarding the need for multiple informants

For members under age 21, requests are reviewed for medical necessity in accordance with Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) requirements.

Coding Information

Any codes listed on this policy are for informational purposes only. Do not rely on the accuracy and inclusion of specific codes. Inclusion of a code does not guarantee coverage and/or reimbursement for a service or procedure.

CPT® Code(s)	Description	Comments
97151	Behavior identification assessment, administered by a physician or other qualified health care professional, each 15 minutes of the physician's or other qualified health care professional's time face-to-face with patient and/or guardian(s)/caregiver(s) administering assessments and discussing findings and recommendations, and non-face-to-face analyzing past data, scoring/interpreting the assessment, and preparing the report/treatment plan	
97153	Adaptive behavior treatment by protocol, administered by technician under the direction of a physician or other qualified health care professional, face-to-face with one patient, each 15 minutes	
97155	Adaptive behavior treatment with protocol modification, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional, which may include simultaneous direction of technician, face-to-face with one patient, each 15 minutes	
97156	Family adaptive behavior treatment guidance, administered by physician or other qualified health care professional (with or without the patient present), face-to-face with guardian(s)/caregiver(s), each 15 minutes	
CPT® Category III Code(s)	**Description**	**Comments**
No code(s) identified		
HCPCS Code(s)	**Description**	**Comments**
No code(s) identified		

References

1. Oklahoma Medicaid. Policy and rules. Subchapter 5. Individual providers and specialties. Part 30. Applied behavior analysis (aba) services. https://oklahoma.gov/ohca/policies-and-rules/xpolicy. Revised September 1, 2025.

Change Summary

05/05/2026 New Policy. Version 000