

# Coverage of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy

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**ALERT!** The information below describes how to access ABA Therapy benefits under the Uniform Medical Plan (UMP Classic, the UMP Consumer-Directed Health Plan, or UMP Plus). Note that some provisions may be subject to change as the plan contracts with more ABA Therapy providers. Always contact UMP Customer Service at 1-888-849-3681 before seeking ABA Therapy services.

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**NOTE: Many of the forms referenced may be found at [www.hca.wa.gov/ump](http://www.hca.wa.gov/ump), or by calling UMP Customer Service at 1-888-849-3681.**

The plan covers Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Therapy only for a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. ABA Therapy services must be preauthorized by the plan before services are performed, or all claims will be denied.

Like other preauthorized services, approved preauthorization is specific to the provider who made the preauthorization request. ABA therapy hours preauthorized for one provider are not automatically transferable to another provider. A change in the provider requires a new preauthorization.

Providers must be appropriately credentialed and qualified to prescribe or perform ABA Therapy services (see “Which providers can I see for ABA Therapy?” below).

The following information is included with this packet, or by calling UMP Customer Service at 1-888-849-3681:

- Criteria for coverage of ABA Therapy (see below).
  - Documentation necessary to request preauthorization (see under “How do I request preauthorization of ABA Therapy services?” below).
  - Instructions for requesting preauthorization (see “How do I request preauthorization of ABA Therapy services?” below).
  - Criteria for providers of ABA Therapy (see “Which providers can I see for ABA Therapy?” below).
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**ALERT!** All ABA Therapy services must be preauthorized before services are provided, including those by plan-approved out-of-network providers. The plan will deny coverage when services are not preauthorized, or when preauthorization is requested but is denied by the plan. You (the patient) will pay all charges associated with noncovered ABA Therapy services, and these noncovered services do not count toward your deductible or out-of-pocket limit.

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**Note:** Autism may be treated using services other than ABA Therapy, such as speech therapy. The requirements stated apply only to ABA Therapy. See the description of the specific services being provided (such as speech therapy) for any requirements or limitations.

## Criteria for coverage of ABA Therapy

Note that all care must be medically necessary and preauthorized to be covered by the plan.

The specific medical criteria for coverage of ABA Therapy is available on the Regence website for providers on the UMP website.

## How do I request preauthorization of ABA Therapy services?

1. The first step is to see a neurologist, pediatric neurologist, developmental pediatrician, psychiatrist, or doctorate-level psychologist for an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnostic assessment, comprehensive evaluation report, and recommended treatment(s). This provider must have expertise in using evidence-based tools to establish or confirm the diagnosis of autism and experience in developing treatment recommendations that consider the full range of autism treatments, of which ABA Therapy may be one component. If ABA Therapy is recommended from the assessment, a prescription for such services is required. **It is important that you contact UMP Customer Service at 1-888-849-3681 for assistance**, to ensure that the necessary information is included in this assessment, or your preauthorization request might be delayed for additional information. ***This step does not require preauthorization by the plan and is eligible for coverage.***
2. If ABA Therapy is prescribed, the next step is to see a Lead Behavioral Therapist (see “Which providers can I see for ABA Therapy?” below) for an ABA Therapy initial report that includes assessment, functional behavior analysis, if indicated; and the ABA Therapy treatment plan. ***This step does not require preauthorization by the plan and is eligible for coverage.***
3. Providers should submit a request for preauthorization for the ABA Therapy services to the plan. Providers may contact UMP Customer Service at 1-888-849-3681 for assistance.

### Documentation necessary to request preauthorization

The initial preauthorization request must include the following documentation:

- ABA Therapy Preauthorization Request Form (to be completed by the Lead Behavioral Therapist): This form is available on the UMP website, or you can call 1-888-849-3681 to request a copy.
- Clinical evaluation, which includes confirmation of an ASD diagnosis, and recommended treatment approach from a clinician meeting the criteria in Step 2, above.
- Written Clinical Order, Directive, or Prescription for ABA Therapy services from a clinician meeting the criteria above.
- ABA Therapy initial report that includes assessment and ABA Assessment and Treatment Plan Form (to be completed by the Lead Behavioral Therapist, who should call 1-888-849-3681 to request a copy).

### Concurrent Review: What should I do if my current authorization is expiring?

Within five business days of the end of a current authorization, the Lead Behavioral Therapist should submit the following documents:

- ABA Assessment and Treatment Plan Form\* reflecting an updated, current treatment plan.
- A new ABA Preauthorization Request Form, available on the UMP website or by calling 1-888-849-3681 (to be completed by the Lead Behavioral Therapist)

Following the submission of the information listed above, the plan may request additional information prepared and submitted by the Center of Excellence provider described under #1 above. The plan will specify what must be included in this report, which is intended to assess progress and prospective treatment in further detail, and may include a written Clinical Order, Directive, or Prescription for ABA Therapy services.

If you or your provider has any questions about how to submit a preauthorization request for ABA Therapy, or what needs to be included, please call UMP Customer Service at 1-888-849-3681.

*\*The Lead Behavioral Therapist should contact UMP Customer Service at 1-888-849-3681 for a copy of the **ABA Assessment and Treatment Plan Form**. Please contact your Lead Behavioral Therapist if you have questions about this form.*

## Which providers can I see for ABA Therapy?

You can use either an agency-based team of providers for ABA Therapy services, or providers practicing independently who have the qualifications described below.

Here's how it works:

- Either an ABA Agency or an ABA Service Coordinator practicing independently (see below) must be involved, and is responsible for providing therapy oversight and billing the plan.
- One or more providers as described in the table below perform ABA Therapy services.
- All ABA Therapy services must be performed in relationship with an independent ABA Service Coordinator or ABA Agency and be part of an approved treatment plan. ABA Therapy services outside of these requirements are not covered by the plan.

ABA Agency	OR	Independent Providers
<p><b>A State-Certified/Licensed ABA Therapy Agency:</b> Regence is working with ABA Therapy Agencies to cover their services for UMP members.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> A State-Certified/Licensed ABA Therapy Agency may consist of one or more providers.</p>		<p><b>ABA Service Coordinator:</b> A psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or Master's level behavioral health counselor who is preferred for UMP members (in the Regence BlueShield network).</p>

### What ABA Agencies OR Independent ABA Service Coordinators do:

- Coordinate billing for ABA Therapy providers (see below) OR bill for their own services.
- Supervise\* ABA Therapy providers (see below).

### What ABA Agencies OR Independent ABA Service Coordinators may also do:

- Perform Step 1 assessment (if a qualified provider type as described above).
- Provide ABA Therapy services directly, if they are certified as a board certified behavior analyst (BCBA).

*\*Supervision of ABA Therapy providers includes the development of treatment plans and ongoing plan requirements.*

## ABA Therapy Providers

The following provider types perform ABA Therapy services and are employed by an ABA Agency, or their services are coordinated and billed by an independent ABA Service Coordinator. These providers must meet appropriate certification standards and qualifications to provide ABA Therapy.

- **Lead Behavioral Therapist:** Performs ABA Therapy and/or supervises the ABA Therapy Assistant/Technician. Can develop and revise ABA treatment plans.
- **ABA Therapy Assistant/Technician:** Performs ABA Therapy under the supervision of a Lead Behavioral Therapist.

## How do I find a provider for ABA Therapy?

Because Regence is actively recruiting ABA Therapy Agencies and providers, please contact UMP Customer Service at 1-888-849-3681 to assist you with finding an ABA Therapy provider. UMP Customer Service can also assist you in finding providers in your area who can evaluate and diagnose autism or confirm an autism diagnosis. If a preferred provider is not available in your area, you may request that a case manager contact you to assist with the next steps in seeking coverage.

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**ALERT!** Outside of the Regence Service Area, ABA Therapy services may be covered when performed by a covered provider type. Out-of-network providers may be paid at the out-of-network rate.

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## Submitting claims for ABA Therapy

### *Within the Regence Service Area*

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**ALERT!** Within the Regence Service Area, ABA Therapy claims must be submitted by the ABA Service Coordinator or State Certified/Licensed ABA Therapy Agency. Claims for ABA Therapy services submitted by the ABA Therapist, member, or anyone else will not be covered.

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ABA Service Coordinators and State Certified/Licensed ABA Therapy Agencies should submit claims to Regence as they usually would. No special forms are necessary. Claims for dates of service prior to plan approval (preauthorization) are not covered unless specified by the plan.

### *Outside of the Regence Service Area*

Providers that are recognized by their local Blue plan should submit claims for approved ABA Therapy services to their local Blue plan as usual.

## How will ABA therapy claims be paid?

ABA Therapy services are paid under the medical benefit. They are subject to the deductible (medical deductible for UMP Classic and UMP Plus) and you pay a percentage of the cost (coinsurance) depending on the network status of the provider (preferred/network or out-of-network). Please see your plan's (UMP Classic, UMP CDHP, or UMP Plus) 2016 Certificate of Coverage for details. You may access the Certificates of Coverage at [www.hca.wa.gov/ump](http://www.hca.wa.gov/ump), or get a paper copy by calling 1-888-849-3681.