Chapter 182-531A WAC

APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

WAC

182-531A-0100 Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Purpose. Applied behavior analysis (ABA) assists children and their families to improve the core symptoms associated with autism spectrum disorders or other developmental disabilities for which there is evidence ABA is effective, per WAC 182-501-0165. ABA services support learning, skill development, and assistance in any of the following areas or domains: Social, behavior, adaptive, motor, vocational, or cognitive.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-0100, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]

182-531A-0200 Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Definitions. The following definitions and those found in chapter 182-500 WAC, medical definitions, and chapter 182-531 WAC, physician-related services, apply throughout this chapter.

Applied behavior analysis or ABA - Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is an empirically validated approach to improve behavior and skills related to core impairments associated with autism and a number of other developmental disabilities. ABA involves the systematic application of scientifically validated principles of human behavior to change inappropriate behaviors. ABA uses scientific methods to reliably demonstrate that behavioral improvements are caused by the prescribed interventions. ABA's focus on social significance promotes a family-centered and whole-life approach to intervention. Common methods used include: Assessment of behavior, caregiver interviews, direct observation, and collection of data on targeted behaviors. A single-case design is used to demonstrate the relationship between the environment and behavior as a means to implement client-specific ABA therapy treatment plans with specific goals and promote lasting change. ABA also includes the implementation of a functional behavior assessment to identify environmental variables that maintain challenging behavior and allow for more effective interventions to be developed that reduce challenging behaviors and teach appropriate replacement behaviors.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) - A condition, as defined by Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) criteria.

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnostic tool - A validated tool used to establish the presence (or absence) of autism and to make a definitive diagnosis which will be the basis for treatment decisions and assist in the development of a multidisciplinary clinical treatment plan. Examples of autism diagnostic tools include:

(a) Autism Diagnosis Interview (ADI); and
(b) Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS).

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) screening tool - A tool used to detect ASD indicators or risk factors which then require confirmation. Examples of screening tools include, but are not limited to:

(a) Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ);
(b) Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales (CSBS);
(c) Parent's Evaluation and Developmental Status (PEDS);
(d) Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (MCHAT); and
(e) Screening Tools for Autism in Toddlers and young children (STAT).

Centers of excellence (COE) - A hospital, medical center, or other health care provider that establishes or confirms the diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder and develops the multidisciplinary clinical treatment plan and that has been designated by the agency as a center of excellence.

Client or child - For the purposes of this chapter, client or child means a person younger than twenty-one years of age and enrolled in Washington apple health (WAH).

Family member - A child's parent, guardian, caregiver, or other support person.

Qualifying diagnosis - A diagnosis of an ASD, as defined by the DSM, or other developmental disability for which there is evidence ABA is effective.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-0200, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]

182-531A-0300 Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Threshold requirements. The medicaid agency pays for ABA services when the services are:

(1) Covered;
(2) Medically necessary;
(3) Within the scope of the eligible client's medical care program;
(4) Provided to clients who meet the criteria in WAC 182-531A-0400;
(5) Within currently accepted standards of evidence-based medical practice;

(12/1/14)
WAC 182-531A-0400  Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Client eligibility. To be eligible for applied behavior analysis (ABA) services, a client must:

(1) Be under twenty-one years of age;

(2) Be covered under Washington apple health (WAH);

(3) Provide documentation created by a clinician that:

(a) Establishes the presence of functional impairment; delay in communication, behavior, or social interaction; or repetitive or stereotyped behavior;

(b) Establishes that the client's impairment, delay, or behaviors adversely affect development or communication, or both, such that:

(i) The client cannot adequately participate in home, school, or community activities because the behavior or skill deficit interferes with these activities; or

(ii) The child's behavior endangers the child or another, or impedes access to home and community activities available to other children of the same age; and

(c) An agency-recognized center of excellence (COE) has confirmed that:

(i) The child meets all requirements in (a) and (b) of this subsection;

(ii) The child has a qualifying diagnosis;

(iii) There is a reasonable calculation the requested services will result in measurable improvement in either the client's behavior, skills, or both; and

(iv) Either:

(A) Less intrusive or less intensive behavioral interventions have been tried and have not been successful; or

(B) No equally effective and substantially less costly alternative is available for reducing interfering behaviors, increasing prosocial behaviors, or maintaining desired behaviors.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-0300, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]

WAC 182-531A-0500  Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Stage one: COE evaluation and order. (1) Any person may refer a client suspected of meeting the criteria in WAC 182-531A-0400 to a center of excellence (COE) for an evaluation.

(2) The COE must complete a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation and create a multidisciplinary clinical treatment plan that includes:

(a) Documentation showing how the diagnosis was made or confirmed by a COE physician or psychologist that includes:

(i) Results of formal diagnostic procedures performed by a clinician, including name of measure, dates, and results, as available; or

(ii) Clinical findings and observations used to confirm the diagnosis;

(b) Documentation showing that the client's behaviors or skill deficits adversely affect on development or communication, or demonstrating injurious behavior, such that:

(i) The client cannot adequately participate in home, school, or community activities because behavior or skill deficit interferes with these activities; or

(ii) The client presents a safety risk to self or others;

(c) Documentation showing that, if applied behavior analysis (ABA) is included in the multidisciplinary clinical treatment plan:

(i) Less intrusive or less intensive behavioral interventions have been tried and were not successful; or

(ii) There is no equally effective alternative available for reducing interfering behaviors, increasing prosocial behaviors, or maintaining desired behaviors;

(d) Recommendations that address all of the child's health care needs;

(e) A statement that the evaluating and prescribing provider believes that there is a reasonable calculation that the requested ABA services will result in measurable improvement in the client's behavior or skills; and

(f) An order for ABA services. If ordered, a copy of the COE's comprehensive diagnostic evaluation and multidisciplinary clinical treatment plan must be forwarded to the ABA provider selected by the child's guardian under this chapter or provided to the child's guardian to forward to the selected ABA provider.

(3) The COE must also include the following items, if it possesses a copy:

(a) Results of routine developmental screening performed by the child's primary care provider at well child visits;

(b) Audiology and vision assessment results, or documentation that vision and hearing were determined to be within normal limits during assessment and not a barrier to completing a valid evaluation;

(c) The name of the completed autism screening questionnaire, including date completed and significant results;

(d) Documentation of a formal cognitive or development assessment performed by the COE or another qualified clinician, including name of measure, dates, results, and standardized scores providing verbal, nonverbal, and full-scale scores; and

(e) Documentation of a formal adaptive behavior assessment performed by the COE or another qualified clinician, including name of measure, dates, results, and standardized scores providing scores of each domain.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-0500, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]

WAC 182-531A-0600  Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Stage two: Functional assessment and treatment plan development. (1) If the center of excellence's (COE's) evaluating and prescribing provider has ordered applied behavior analysis (ABA) services, the client may begin stage...
two - ABA assessment, functional analysis, and ABA therapy treatment plan development.

(2) Prior to implementing the ABA therapy treatment plan, the ABA provider must receive prior authorization from the agency. The prior authorization request, including the assessment and ABA therapy treatment plan, must be received by the agency within sixty days of the family scheduling the functional assessment.

(3) The child's legal guardian selects the ABA provider and the setting in which services will be rendered. ABA services may be rendered in one of the following settings:

(a) Day services program, which mean an agency-approved, outpatient facility or clinic-based program that:

(i) Employs or contracts with a lead behavior analysis therapist (LBAT), therapy assistant, speech therapist, and if clinically indicated, an occupational therapist, physical therapist, psychologist, medical clinician, and dietitian;

(ii) Provides multidisciplinary services in a short-term day treatment program setting;

(iii) Delivers comprehensive intensive services;

(iv) Embeds early, intensive behavioral interventions in a developmentally appropriate context;

(v) Provides an individualized developmentally appropriate ABA therapy treatment plan for each child; and

(vi) Includes family support and training.

(b) Community-based program, which means a program that provides services in a natural setting, such as a school, home, office, or clinic. A community-based program:

(i) May be used after discharge from a day services program (see subsection (3)(a) of this section);

(ii) Provides a developmentally appropriate ABA therapy treatment plan for each child;

(iii) Provides ABA services in the home (wherever the child resides), office, clinic, or community setting, as required to accomplish the goals in the ABA therapy treatment plan. Examples of community settings are: A park, restaurant, child care, early childhood education, or school and must be included in the ABA therapy treatment plan with services being provided by the enrolled LBAT or therapy assistant approved to provide services via authorization;

(iv) Requires recertification of medical necessity through continued authorization; and

(v) Includes family education, support, and training.

(4) An assessment, as described in this chapter, must be conducted and an ABA therapy treatment plan developed by an LBAT in the setting chosen by the child's legal guardian. The ABA therapy treatment plan must follow the agency's ABA therapy treatment plan report template and:

(a) Be signed by the LBAT responsible for the plan development and oversight;

(b) Be applicable to the services to be rendered over the next six months, based on the LBAT's judgment, and correlate with the COE's current diagnostic evaluation (see WAC 182-531A-0500(2));

(c) Address each behavior, skill deficit, and symptom that prevents the child from adequately participating in home, school, community activities, or that presents a safety risk to the child or others;

(d) Be individualized;

(e) Be client-centered, family-focused, community-based, culturally competent, and minimally intrusive;

(f) Take into account all school or other community resources available to the client, confirm that the requested services are not redundant, but are in coordination with, other services already being provided or otherwise available, and coordinate services (e.g., from school and special education or from early intervention programs and early intervention providers) with other interventions and treatments (e.g., speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, family counseling, and medication management);

(g) Focus on family engagement and training;

(h) Identify and describe in detail the targeted behaviors and symptoms;

(i) Include objective, baseline measurement levels for each target behavior/symptom in terms of frequency, intensity, and duration, including use of curriculum-based measures, single-case studies, or other generally accepted assessment tools;

(j) Include a comprehensive description of treatment interventions, or type of treatment interventions, and techniques specific to each of the targeted behaviors/symptoms, (e.g., discrete trial training, reinforcement, picture exchange, communication systems) including documentation of the number of service hours, in terms of frequency and duration, for each intervention;

(k) Establish treatment goals and objective measures of progress for each intervention specified to be accomplished in the three- to six-month treatment period;

(l) Incorporate strategies for generalized learning skills;

(m) Integrate family education, goals, training, support services, and modeling and coaching family/child interaction;

(n) Incorporate strategies for coordinating treatment with school-based special education programs and community-based early intervention programs, and plan for transition through a continuum of treatments, services, and settings; and

(o) Include measurable discharge criteria and a discharge plan.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-0600, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]

WAC 182-531A-0700 Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Stage three: Delivery of ABA services. (1) Applied behavioral analysis must be prior authorized (PA) before delivery. To request PA, submit the following documents to the agency:

(a) The comprehensive diagnostic evaluation and multidisciplinary clinical treatment plan completed by the center of excellence (COE) described in this chapter;

(b) The ABA assessment and ABA therapy treatment plan described in this chapter; and

(c) Other documents required as described in the agency's ABA provider guide.

(2) After the services are prior authorized, the ABA therapy treatment plan is implemented by the lead behavior analysis therapist (LBAT) or a therapy assistant in conjunction with other care team members. The LBAT is responsible for communicating and collaborating with other care team members to ensure consistency in approaches to achieve treatment goals.
(3) If services are rendered by a therapy assistant, the therapy assistant must:
(a) Assess the client's response to techniques and report that response to the LBAT;
(b) Provide direct on-site services in the client's natural setting found in the home, office, clinic, or community, or in the day services program;
(c) Be supervised directly by an LBAT for a minimum of five percent of total direct care per week (e.g., one hour per twenty hours of care);
(d) Consult the LBAT when considering modification to technique, when barriers and challenges occur that prohibit implementation of plan, and as otherwise clinically indicated (see WAC 182-531-1426 for appropriate procedures and physical interventions and WAC 182-531-1428 for prohibited procedures and physical interventions);
(e) Ensure family involvement through modeling, coaching, and training to support generalization and maintenance of achieved behaviors;
(f) Keep documentation of each visit with the client and family to include targeted behavior, interventions, response, modifications in techniques, and a plan for the next visit, along with behavior tracking sheets that record and graph data collected for each visit; and
(g) Maintain documentation of family's confirmation that the visit occurred, recording signature, and date.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-0700, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]

WAC 182-531A-0800  Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Provider requirements. (1) Stage one. The center of excellence's (COE's) evaluating and prescribing providers must function as a multidisciplinary team whether facility-based or practitioner-based.

(a) The qualifications for a COE are:

(i) The entity or individual employs:

(A) A person or persons licensed under Title 18 RCW who is experienced in the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders and has a specialty in one of the following:

(I) Neurology;
(II) Pediatric neurology;
(III) Developmental pediatrics;
(IV) Psychology;
(V) Pediatric psychiatry; or
(VI) Psychiatry; or

(B) A licensed midlevel practitioner (i.e., advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP) or physician assistant (PA)) who has been trained by and works under the tutelage of one of the specialists in (a)(i)(A) of this subsection and meets the qualifications in (a)(ii) of this subsection; or

(C) Another qualified medical provider who meets qualifications in (a)(ii) of this subsection and who has been designated as a center of excellence by the agency.

(ii) The entity or individual has been prequalified by the agency as meeting or employing persons meeting the following criteria:

(A) Physicians and psychologists must have demonstrated expertise to diagnose an autism spectrum disorder using a validated diagnostic tool or confirm the diagnosis by observing the client's behavior, interviewing family members, or reviewing the documentation available from the client's primary care provider, the child's individualized education plan (IEP), or individualized family service plan (IFSP); or

(B) Have sufficient experience in or knowledge of the medically necessary use of applied behavior analysis (ABA);

(C) Are sufficiently qualified to conduct and document a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation, and to develop a multidisciplinary clinical treatment plan as described in WAC 182-531-1418(2); and

(iii) The entity or individual is enrolled with the agency or the client's MCO, unless the client has third-party insurance.

(b) Examples of providers who can qualify and be paid for these services as a designated COE are:

(i) Multidisciplinary clinics;

(ii) Individual qualified provider offices; and

(iii) Neurodevelopmental centers.

(2) All ABA providers must meet the specified minimum qualifications and comply with applicable state laws.

(a) Lead behavior analysis therapist (LBAT).

(i) Requirements.

(A) The LBAT must be:

(I) Licensed by the department of health (DOH) to practice independently as a physician, psychologist, or licensed mental health practitioner under Title 18 RCW, or credentialed as a certified counselor or certified counselor advisor under Title 18 RCW, in good standing with no license restrictions; or

(II) Employed by or contracted with an agency that is enrolled as a participating provider and licensed by DOH as a hospital, a residential treatment facility, or an in-home services agency and be licensed by DOH to practice independently as a physician, psychologist, licensed mental health practitioner, or credentialed as a counselor, under Title 18 RCW in good standing with no license restrictions; or

(III) Employed or contracted with an agency that is enrolled as a participating provider and licensed by the department of social and health services’ division of behavioral health and recovery (DBHR) with certification to provide ABA services, and be able to meet the staff requirements specified in chapter 388-877A WAC.

(B) The LBAT must:

(I) Enroll as a servicing provider and be authorized to supervise ancillary providers; and

(II) Be a board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA) with proof of board certification through the Behavior Analysis Certification Board; or

(III) Have two hundred twenty-five hours of course work related to behavior analysis and either: Seven hundred fifty hours of supervision under a BCBA, or two years of practical experience designing and implementing comprehensive ABA therapy treatment plans. (a)(ii)(B)(III) of this subsection is retroactive to January 1, 2013.

(ii) Role. The LBAT must:

(A) Develop and maintain an ABA therapy treatment plan that is comprehensive, incorporating treatment being provided by other health care professionals, and that states how all treatment will be coordinated, as applicable; and
(B) Supervise a minimum of five percent of the total direct care provided by the therapy assistant per week (e.g., one hour per twenty hours of care).

(b) Therapy assistant. Requirements.

(i) Therapy assistants must be:

(A) Able to practice independently by being licensed by DOH as a licensed mental health practitioner or credentialed as a counselor under Title 18 RCW in good standing with no license restrictions; or

(B) Employed by or contracted with an agency that is enrolled as a participating provider and licensed by DOH as a hospital, a residential treatment facility, or an in-home services agency with a home health service category to provide ABA services, and be able to practice independently by being licensed by DOH as a licensed mental health practitioner or credentialed as a counselor under Title 18 RCW in good standing with no license restrictions; or

(C) Employed by or contracted with an agency that is enrolled as a participating provider and licensed by DBHR as a community mental health agency with certification to provide ABA services, and be able to meet the staff requirements specified in chapter 388-877A WAC;

(ii) The therapy assistant must:

(A) Have sixty hours of ABA training that includes applicable ABA principles and techniques, services, and caring for a child with core symptoms of autism; and

(B) Have a written letter of attestation signed by the lead LBAT that the therapy assistant has demonstrated competency in implementing ABA therapy treatment plans and delivering ABA services prior to providing services without supervision to covered clients; and

(C) Enroll as a performing/servicing provider.

(iii) Role. The therapy assistant must:

(A) Deliver services according to the ABA therapy treatment plan; and

(B) Be supervised by an LBAT who meets the requirements in (a)(i) of this subsection; and

(C) Review the client's progress with the LBAT at least every two weeks to confirm that the ABA therapy treatment plan still meets the child's needs. If changes are clinically indicated, they must be made by the LBAT.

(c) Licensure for facility-based day program setting. This applies to the model described in WAC 182-531-1420 (2)(a). Outpatient hospital facilities providing these services must meet the applicable DOH licensure requirements. A clinic or nonhospital-based facility providing these services must be licensed as a community mental health agency by DBHR, as described in chapter 388-877A WAC. A provider rendering direct ABA services must meet the qualifications and applicable licensure or certification requirements as described in this subsection, as applicable. Other providers serving as members of the multidisciplinary care team must be licensed or certified under Title 18 RCW, as required.

(a) The ABA assessments to determine the relationship between environmental events and behaviors;

(b) The direct provision of ABA services by the therapy assistant or lead behavior analysis therapist (LBAT);

(c) Initial ABA assessment and development of a written, initial ABA therapy treatment plan, limited to one per year;

(d) Additional ABA assessments and revisions of the initial ABA therapy treatment plan to meet client's needs, limited to four per year;

(e) Supervision of the therapy assistant;

(f) Training and evaluation of family members or caregivers to carry out the approved ABA therapy treatment plans;

(g) Observation of the client's behavior to determine the effectiveness of the approved ABA therapy treatment plan; and

(h) On-site assistance in a difficult or crisis situation.

(2) The agency covers the following services, which may be provided in conjunction with ABA services under other agency programs and be consistent with the program rules in the Washington Administrative Code:

(a) Speech and language therapy;

(b) Occupational therapy;

(c) Physical therapy;

(d) Counseling;

(e) Interpreter services;

(f) Dietician services; and

(g) Transportation services.

(3) The agency does not authorize payment of ABA services if the services are duplicative of services being rendered in another setting.

(4) Limits in amount or frequency of the covered services described in this section are subject to the provisions in WAC 182-501-0169, limitation extension.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-0900, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]

WAC 182-531A-1000 Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Noncovered services. The Medicaid agency does not cover the following services under the ABA program including, but not limited to:

(1) Autism camps;

(2) Dolphin therapy;

(3) Equine therapy/hippo therapy;

(4) Primarily educational services;

(5) Recreational therapy;

(6) Respite care;

(7) Safety monitoring services;

(8) School-based health care services or early intervention program-based services, unless prior authorized and as described in WAC 182-531-1420 (2)(b)(iii);

(9) Vocational rehabilitation;

(10) Life coaching; and

(11) Treatment that is unproven or investigational (e.g., holding therapy, Higashi (day life therapy), auditory integration therapy).

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-1000, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]
WAC 182-531A-1100  Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Prior authorization and recertification of ABA services. (1) The Medicaid agency requires prior authorization (PA) and recertification of the medical necessity of applied behavior analysis (ABA) services.

(2) Requirements for PA requests are described in WAC 182-531A-0700.

(3) The agency may reduce or deny services requested based on medical necessity (refer to subsection (5) of this section) when completing PA or recertification responsibilities.

(4) The following are requirements for recertification of ABA services:

(a) Continued ABA services require the agency's authorization. Authorization is granted in three-month increments, or longer at the agency's discretion;

(b) The lead behavior analysis therapist (LBAT) must request authorization for continuing services three weeks prior to the expiration date of the current authorization. A reevaluation and revised ABA therapy treatment plan documenting the client's progress and showing measurable changes in the frequency, intensity, and duration of the targeted behavior/symptoms addressed in the previously authorized ABA therapy treatment plan must be submitted with this request. Documentation must include:

(i) Projection of eventual outcome;

(ii) Assessment instruments;

(iii) Developmental markers of readiness; and

(iv) Evidence of coordination with providers.

(c) When completing recertification responsibilities, the agency may request another evaluation from the COE to obtain that provider's review and recommendation. This COE provider must review the ABA therapy treatment plan, conduct a face-to-face visit with the child, facilitate a multidisciplinary record review of the client's progress, hold a family conference, or request a second opinion before recommending continued ABA services. Services will continue pending recertification.

(d) When completing recertification responsibilities, the agency may retroactively authorize dates of service. Services will continue pending recertification.

(5) Basis for denial or reduction of services includes, but is not limited to, the following:

(a) Lack of medical necessity, for example:

(i) Failure to respond to ABA services, even after trying different ABA techniques and approaches, if applicable; or

(ii) Absence of meaningful, measurable, functional improvement changes or progress has plateaued without documentation of significant interfering events (e.g., serious physical illness, major family disruption, change of residence), if applicable. For changes to be meaningful they must be:

(A) Confirmed through data;

(B) Documented in charts and graphs;

(C) Durable over time beyond the end of the actual treatment session; and

(D) Generalizable outside of the treatment setting to the client's residence and the larger community within which the client resides; or

(b) Noncompliance as demonstrated by a pattern of failure of the family to:

(i) Keep appointments;

(ii) Attend treatment sessions;

(iii) Attend scheduled family training sessions;

(iv) Complete homework assignments; and

(v) Apply training as directed by the therapy assistant or LBAT. Absences that are reasonably justified (e.g., illness) are not considered a pattern.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-1100, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]

WAC 182-531A-1200  Applied behavior analysis (ABA)—Services provided via telemedicine. Telemedicine, as defined in WAC 182-531-1730, may be used to provide the following authorized services:

(1) Program supervision when the client is present; and

(2) Family training, which does not require the client's presence.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160. WSR 14-24-083, § 182-531A-1200, filed 12/1/14, effective 1/1/15.]