

# MASSACHUSETTS ADVOCATES *for* CHILDREN

## MassHealth: NEW Coverage of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Services for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

July 31, 2015

### Update from MAC's Autism Center and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute

- ◆ A new state law requires MassHealth to cover medically necessary ABA services for children with autism under age 21.
- ◆ ABA services are now available to MassHealth members. The FAQs below explain how to get coverage now and after October (when the process will change) for members who have MassHealth either as their primary or secondary insurance.



#### Board of Directors

David Barone  
Jacquelynne J. Bowman,  
Esq.  
Christal Fenton, Esq.  
Michael Fleischer, Esq.  
Margareth Frayne Sodre  
Ann Guay, Esq.  
Eileen Hagerty, Esq.  
Sharon Hamel  
Richard Howard, Esq.  
Matthew J. Iverson,  
Esq., Chair  
Dr. Renald Raphael  
Carlos Rojas Alvarez  
Rob Shusterman  
Meghan Streff Spring  
Tee Thach-Hasan

#### Emeritus

Hubert E. Jones  
Lawrence Kotin, Esq.  
S. Stephen Rosenfeld,

#### Executive Director

Jerry Mogul

#### Senior Project Directors

Susan Cole  
Kim M Janey  
Julia K. Landau  
Thomas Mela

### FAMILIES:

#### *Q. What types of MassHealth insurance covers ABA services?*

A. Children under the age of 21 who have been diagnosed with autism and are covered by MassHealth Standard and CommonHealth<sup>1</sup> are entitled to medically necessary ABA services. Coverage is also available to members who have MassHealth as secondary insurance.

#### *Q. MassHealth is my primary insurance. How can I get ABA services for my child now (until October)?*

A. MassHealth members should locate an ABA provider and have the provider contact MassHealth to request prior authorization for ABA. Providers need to enroll with MassHealth and request prior authorization to evaluate your child and also to approve an ABA treatment plan. Your provider must receive this authorization from MassHealth before he or she can provide any services. If you already have an ABA provider, he or she must also enroll with MassHealth and request prior authorization to begin providing covered ABA services.

#### *Q. How do I find an ABA provider?*

A. The Autism Insurance Resource Center maintains a [list of ABA providers](#) that can be used to help locate a provider.

<sup>1</sup> Children who are covered by Family Assistance will also be entitled to medically necessary ABA services in October. Additional information will be provided as process and procedures are clarified by MassHealth.

***Q. What will happen in October 2015 if MassHealth is my primary insurance?***

A: Starting in October, children enrolled in managed care plans will access medically necessary ABA services through their managed care plans (Boston Medical Center Health Net Plan, Fallon Community Health Plan, Health New England, Neighborhood Health Plan, Tufts Health Plan - Network Health, or the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership).

***Q. Will ABA providers still need to request prior authorization for ABA Services in October 2015?***

A. Yes. After managed care plans add ABA as a covered service, which is expected in October 2015, your child's ABA provider will need to request authorization for coverage from your child's MassHealth managed care plan.

***Q. Will my child continue to receive services in October, without interruption, when the managed care plans become responsible for provision of ABA services?***

A. MassHealth intends for managed care plans to provide continuing ABA services for 90 days after Sept 30<sup>th</sup> to allow time for ABA to be re-authorized by your managed care plan. MassHealth is negotiating new contract terms with the managed care plans, which will be effective October 1<sup>st</sup>. These new contract terms will ensure continuity of care, requiring the managed care plans to cover the same level of previously authorized ABA services through out-of-network providers for 90 days.

**MASSHEALTH AS SECONDARY INSURANCE: Co-pays and Deductibles:**

***Q. What if my child has MassHealth as secondary insurance coverage?***

A. The Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP) is now covering copays and deductibles for children with autism under age 21 who receive ABA services through private insurance (Employer Sponsored Plan or Qualified Health Plan) and have MassHealth as secondary insurance and are enrolled with MBHP.

***Q What does my child's ABA provider need to do so that my co-pays and deductibles are covered?***

A. Providers need to call MBHP to be authorized (this is separate from MassHealth ABA enrollment) and submit an Explanation of Benefits showing that cost sharing is due. This MBHP authorization process is easier and more expeditious than the MassHealth ABA approval process. Providers can call community relations for information 1-800-495-0086.

**Q: Will coverage of co-pays and deductibles change in October?**

A: MBHP will continue to cover co-pays and deductibles after October 1.

***Q: Can I get reimbursed for cost-sharing that I have already paid out this year?***

A: MBHP is processing provider claims for cost-sharing for dates of service back to May 18, 2015. Your provider should be willing to reimburse you for the cost-sharing you have paid since then, and bill MBHP.

**PROVIDERS:**

***Q. I'm an ABA provider, what do I need to do to provide services to children with MassHealth primary insurance (or MassHealth secondary to a policy that does not cover ABA) from now until October?***

A. Providers must be approved by MassHealth as an ABA provider (even if they are already enrolled in another capacity). Providers can call 617-847-3786 for assistance and guidance. Before providing any services, including an initial evaluation, providers must submit a request for prior authorization (PA) to MassHealth that includes documentation of medical necessity for ABA.

The PA-1 Request Form is online at <http://www.mass.gov/masshealth> (click on Provider forms). The documentation submitted with the standard prior authorization request form should be similar to what is required by commercial insurers to authorize ABA services.

***Q. What is acceptable evidence of medical necessity for ABA services?***

A. Evidence of medical necessity will most likely include an evaluation from a qualified specialist (e.g., developmental pediatrician, pediatric neurologist, psychologist with developmental or child/adolescent expertise, psychiatrist or other licensed physician experienced in the diagnosis and treatment of autism) that incorporates a formal diagnostic and/or functional assessment, includes a comprehensive medical evaluation to rule out an underlying medical etiology, establishes a DSM-V diagnosis of autism, and supports the need for ABA services.

***Q. Must a provider be MassHealth approved before submitting prior authorization for services?***

A. Providers can simultaneously submit an application for approval as a MassHealth provider of ABA services, and submit prior authorization requests for a BCBA evaluation or ABA treatment.

***Q. What if a child is already receiving ABA services and has a recent BCBA evaluation, (e.g., as part of Early Intervention or by an Autism Waiver provider)?***

A. If an evaluation by a BCBA has recently been conducted, you should check with MassHealth at 617-847-3786 to see if the evaluation can be submitted rather than conducting a new evaluation. An evaluation/treatment plan conducted within the last two months should be acceptable.

***Q. Will Early Intervention ABA providers be approved as MassHealth ABA providers? What about ABA providers in the Autism Waiver program?***

A. These ABA providers are encouraged to apply as MassHealth approved providers. This is particularly important to help ensure that children who are aging out of EI and the Autism Waiver can continue to receive necessary ABA services.

***Q. I'm an ABA provider, what do I need to do to be paid for cost sharing for children with private insurance that covers ABA and MassHealth secondary coverage?***

A. Almost all children and youth under age 21 with MassHealth secondary are enrolled with MBHP. Providers need to call MBHP to be authorized (this is separate from MassHealth ABA enrollment). This MBHP authorization process is easier and more expeditious than the MassHealth ABA approval process. For information about this authorization, ABA providers only can e-mail <mailto:MBHPNetworkManagement@valueoptions.com>.

Once authorized, providers can call community relations for information on submitting an Explanation of Benefits showing that cost sharing is due: 1-800-495-0086.

This process is not expected to change on October 1, 2015.

***Q. Is MBHP covering co-pays for ABA services that providers have already delivered this year?***

A. Yes. MBHP is processing provider claims for cost-sharing for dates of service back to May 18, 2015. Since MBHP will not reimburse members, families may contact providers for reimbursement paid since then. Providers should be prepared to reimburse members for cost-sharing that they can now receive from MBHP.

***Q. How does the process for providing ABA services change after October 1, 2015?***

A. After October 1, 2015, MassHealth Managed Care plans are expected to assume responsibility for covering ABA services for children and youth under age 21 who are enrolled in MassHealth Standard, CommonHealth or Family Assistance. Starting in early August, providers should contact the Managed Care plans about each plan's procedure for joining the plan's network and obtaining authorization for ABA services for its members. The plans will be required to continue paying claims for services authorized prior to October 1, 2015 from out-of-network providers for a 90-day period to avoid interruption in covered services for their members.