Insurance Resource Center for Autism & Behavioral Health

UMass Chan MEDICAL SCHOOL | Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center | Insurance Resource Center for Autism and Behavioral Health

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Cropped shot of a group of unrecognizable people holding hands

Finding an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Provider

Following these steps will help you to navigate what can sometimes be a challenging process of finding an ABA provider:

1. Before starting, understand that ABA therapy is one type of treatment for autism, and within the practice of ABA, there are many approaches. It may be helpful to review some basic information to familiarize yourself with this therapy, as well as other treatments.

A good summary of ABA can be found on the Autism Speaks website: https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis

A good general discussion of autism treatments can be found on the Center for Disease Control website: https://www.cdc.gov/autism/treatment/index.html

2. Obtain a list of ABA providers that are in-network for your health insurance. You may call your insurance company to obtain a list and/or download a copy of the ABA provider list at the link provided on the Insurance Resource Center website.

3. Search the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Access (MABHA) website (https://www.mabhaccess.com). The MABHA website helps both providers and individuals locate openings for a range of services, including ABA. There are many provider directories, but this one includes updates on current availability. Because of this, we recommend searching this site even if you have other insurance, as many of the providers in this network also take other insurance.

Asian disabled boys and autistic girl learning to color/paint in school

4. When you call a provider, have your insurance cards available and be prepared with your questions. Please see "Ask these 10 questions when searching for a quality ABA provider" (https://s3.amazonaws.com/disability-info/AIRC/pdf/10-questions-ABA-Provider.pdf) by Lindsey Snider. Be sure to let the provider know about any flexibility in your child's schedule, i.e., times available during the school day or on weekends.

5. Be persistent. Call providers every 1-2 weeks for updates on staff availability. Various factors can affect wait times, which may end up being longer or shorter than the initial estimate you received from a provider.

6. Be patient. Agency staffing issues may limit therapy hours or add to wait times. Sometimes this means that your child will initially be offered fewer hours of ABA than your doctor has determined to be medically necessary.

7. If you find a provider with availability, but they don't accept your insurance, a single case agreement may be an option. Under a single case agreement, the insurance company agrees to cover ABA services from your out-of-network provider and that provider agrees to accept the insurer's in-network rate for those services. This is a temporary solution until (1) you find an in-network provider with availability or (2) the out-of-network provider completes the credentialing process to become an in-network provider.

8. Can't find a provider with availability? Ask your insurer for help. Be sure to keep notes on the calls you've made, including which agency you called, who you talked with, the expected wait time for staffing availability, and any other details. It's important to keep a record of your attempts to secure a provider, so that you can share this information with your insurer, especially if you need to request permission to use an out-of-network provider through a single case agreement.

9. Not every ABA therapist will be the right fit for your child. It may take some time for your child (and the rest of your family) to adjust. Ask questions, do research. But if you still aren't comfortable, or have concerns, talk to your agency about requesting a different therapist(s) to work with your child.

Diverse group of children laying down looking up at the camera

For further information and assistance, please contact the IRC at 774-455-4056 or email airc@umassmed.edu.
This fact sheet and other important information is available at our website, www.massairc.org.

Scan the QR Code to view this fact sheet online

https://bit.ly/3Q9bTDm

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