

**COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**  
**Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation**  
**DIVISION OF INSURANCE**

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COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE

**BULLETIN 2024-01**

**TO:** Commercial Health Insurers; Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Inc.; and Health Maintenance Organizations Offering or Renewing Insured Health Products in Massachusetts

**FROM:** Gary D. Anderson, Commissioner of Insurance 

**DATE:** January 16, 2024

**RE:** Using Standard Prior Authorization Forms when Reviewing Requests for Applied Behavioral Analysis Services

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The Division of Insurance (“Division”) issues this Bulletin to inform insured health carriers (“Carriers”) about the use of standard prior authorization forms when reviewing requests for Applied Behavioral Analysis (“ABA”) services. Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 176O, §25(c), the Division is mandated to implement health services prior authorization forms.

The Massachusetts Collaborative, composed of representatives from insurance carriers, provider groups and associations, developed and submitted a proposed standard prior authorization form for use in reviewing requests for ABA services.

The Division solicited comment on the Collaborative’s proposed standard authorization form, and held an informational session on October 24, 2023 to hear all thoughts about potential changes. In response to comments provided during the information session, the Massachusetts Collaborative submitted an amended form to the Division on December 13, 2023. The amended form, as included in the Appendix to this Bulletin, is approved by the Division as the standard prior authorization form for ABA services under insured health plans. Carriers may no longer require the use of any other paper form other than the standard form, which they shall make available for use by all contracted providers.

By no later than 90 days after the issuance of the Bulletin, the Division expects that Carriers shall take all necessary steps to amend their utilization review systems to accept the approved standard prior authorization form for ABA services when submitted by providers by mail, as an attachment to electronic mail, or by facsimile machine. The applicable standard prior authorization form will serve as sufficient information upon which the Carrier should make its decisions about the medical necessity and appropriateness of the requested service or procedure. For providers who use existing forms for prior authorization, Carriers will continue to accept these forms until six months after the issuance of this Bulletin.

Six months after the issuance of this Bulletin, the Division expects that all Carriers will amend any electronic or internet-based systems used to collect utilization review information, so that those systems will only ask questions as stated in the approved form in a format and order substantially similar to the format of the approved format. Carriers wishing to modify the format or order from the standard form are required to submit screenshots of all such forms for the Division's review before their use in the market. Data collected electronically by Carriers for prior authorizations should be identical to the data collected on these paper forms.

The Division is aware that Carriers and providers may be at differing degrees of readiness for implementing standard prior authorization form. Although many provider organizations may be ready to implement the new form, it appears that other providers may not yet be prepared. The Division is sending this guidance to remind all Carriers of their obligations under federal rules. As the electronic and paper forms become available, the Division strongly encourages Carriers to consider taking steps to work with provider organizations to educate contracted and other providers about the use of uniform prior authorization forms for ABA services. Carriers are encouraged to work with contracted providers to use the standard forms within 90 days and electronic form by no later than six months after the issuance of this Bulletin.

If you have any questions about this Bulletin, please contact Kevin Beagan at 617-521-7323 or [Kevin.beagan@state.ma.us](mailto:Kevin.beagan@state.ma.us).

## APPENDIX

# MASSACHUSETTS STANDARD FORM FOR APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS SERVICES PRIOR AUTHORIZATION REQUESTS

Today's Date: _____	Requested Authorization Date Range: _____ <i>Authorization period not to exceed 6 months. Requests must align with a provider's contract and with covered benefits of the member.</i>
Applied Behavior Analysis Services Require One of the Following Prior Authorization Approvals: <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Evaluation (Complete Section 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Continued Services (Complete Sections 1 and 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Initial Services (Complete Sections 1 and 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Amended Request for Continued Services (Complete Sections 1 and 2) <b>THE LICENSED APPLIED BEHAVIORAL ANALYST (LABA) RENDERING AND/OR SUPERVISING THE AUTISM SERVICES SHOULD COMPLETE THIS FORM. SUBMISSION OF THIS FORM DOES NOT GUARANTEE AUTHORIZATION OF YOUR REQUEST.</b>	
<b>SECTION 1</b>	
<b>MEMBER INFORMATION:</b>	
Member Name: _____	Member ID #: _____
DOB: _____	
Sex Assigned at Birth: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> "X" or Intersex	
Current Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender Male <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Street Address: _____	
City: _____	State: _____
Zip Code: _____	
Phone: _____	
<b>PROVIDER INFORMATION:</b>	
Agency Name/NPI #: _____	Agency Contact Person: _____
Agency Street Address: _____	
City: _____	State: _____
Zip Code: _____	
LABA Professional Name: _____	
Provider Street Address: _____	
City: _____	State: _____
Zip Code: _____	
Phone: _____	Fax: _____
LABA NPI #: _____	LABA License #: _____
Tax ID #: _____	
<b>DIAGNOSIS CODE:</b>	
Definitive ICD-10 Diagnosis (F Code[s]): _____	
Provider Who Completed the Diagnostic Evaluation: _____	Date Completed: _____
Licensure (Select One of the Following): <input type="checkbox"/> Licensed Physician <input type="checkbox"/> Licensed Psychologist <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
<b>CLINICAL INFORMATION — PLEASE SUBMIT DIAGNOSTIC REPORT WITH REQUESTS FOR INITIAL EVALUATIONS:</b>	
Please Specify the Services Your Patient Has Received in the Past Three Years:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individualized Education Program (IEP)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)/Early Intervention Services	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	

### SECTION 2

**INDICATE OTHER PROVIDERS (E.G., OCCUPATIONAL, PHYSICAL, OR SPEECH THERAPIST) INVOLVED IN YOUR PATIENT'S CARE AND ANY COMMUNICATION YOU HAVE HAD WITH THOSE PROVIDERS.**

PROVIDER AND SPECIALTY:	COMMUNICATION
Provider Name: _____	Date Last Contacted: _____
Specialty: _____	Description of Care Coordination: _____
Provider Name: _____	Date Last Contacted: _____
Specialty: _____	Description of Care Coordination: _____
Provider Name: _____	Date Last Contacted: _____
Specialty: _____	Description of Care Coordination: _____

**SECTION 2 (CONTINUED)**

**CURRENT MEDICATIONS:**

**IF REQUESTING SERVICES, PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR PATIENT'S MEDICATION PLAN. PLEASE INCLUDE MORE DETAILED INFORMATION REGARDING TREATMENT LENGTH, PATIENT RESPONSE, COMPLIANCE, AND HISTORY OF MEDICATIONS IN THE ATTACHED TREATMENT PLAN.**

Is your patient receiving medications?  Yes  No If yes, by whom?

If yes, please list current medications and dosages:

**CLINICAL PRESENTATION:**

Please identify which of the core areas of the ASD diagnosis will be targeted and expanded upon in the attached Treatment Plan:

- Communication Deficits     Social Deficits     Maladaptive Behaviors     Repetitive/Restricted Behaviors

Please indicate the severity level of Autism Spectrum Disorder per the DSM-V diagnostic criteria (Level 3 "Requiring very substantial support," Level 2 "Requiring substantial support," and Level 1 "Requiring support"), in addition to any specifiers:

With or Without Accompanying Intellectual Impairment: \_\_\_\_\_

With or Without Accompanying Language Impairment: \_\_\_\_\_

Associated with Another Neurodevelopmental, Mental, or Behavioral Disorder: \_\_\_\_\_

Severity Level:

With Catatonia

Associated with a Known Medical or Genetic Condition or Environmental Factor: \_\_\_\_\_

**ASSESSMENT TOOL(S):**

Please identify which assessment tool or tools were used to measure progress and address all core areas of autism spectrum disorder, as well as the date(s) completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Additional Information:

Signature of Treating LABA Professional: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ABA AUTHORIZATION CODE REQUEST CHART**

*\*Please fill out EITHER # of units requested per week, OR # of units per authorization period, per individual health plan policy. Providers should consult the health plan's coverage policies, member benefits, and medical necessity guidelines to complete this section. Requests must align with a provider's contract and with covered benefits of the member.*

CODE	DESCRIPTION 1 Unit = 15 Minutes, 4 Units = 1 Hour	# OF UNITS REQUESTED PER WEEK (HOURS PER WEEK)	# OF UNITS FOR AUTHORIZATION PERIOD	PLANNED SERVICE LOCATION (EX. HOME, OFFICE, COMMUNITY, ETC.)
97151	Behavior Identification Assessment, Administered by a Physician or Other Qualified Health Care Professional (15-Minute Unit)			
97152	Behavior Identification—Supporting Assessment by a Technician (15-Minute Unit)			
97153	Adaptive Behavior Treatment by Technician (15-Minute Unit)			
97154	Group Adaptive Behavior Treatment Protocol Technician (15-Minute Unit)			
97155	Adaptive Behavior Treatment with Protocol, Administered by a Physician or Other Qualified Health Care Professional (15-Minute Unit)			
97156	Family Adaptive Behavior Treatment Guidance, Administered by a Physician or Other Qualified Health Care Professional (15-Minute Unit)			
97157	Multiple-Family Group Adaptive Behavior Treatment Guidance, Administered by a Physician or Other Qualified Health Care Professional (15-Minute Unit)			

**ABA AUTHORIZATION CODE REQUEST CHART (CONTINUED)**

*\*Please fill out EITHER # of units requested per week, OR # of units per authorization period, per individual health plan policy. Providers should consult the health plan's coverage policies, member benefits, and medical necessity guidelines to complete this section. Requests must align with a provider's contract and with covered benefits of the member.*

CODE	DESCRIPTION 1 Unit = 15 Minutes, 4 Units = 1 Hour	# OF UNITS REQUESTED PER WEEK (HOURS PER WEEK)	# OF UNITS FOR AUTHORIZATION PERIOD	PLANNED SERVICE LOCATION (EX. HOME, OFFICE, COMMUNITY, ETC.)
97158	Group Adaptive Behavior with Protocol, Administered by a Physician or Other Qualified Health Care Professional (15-Minute Unit)			
*0362T	Behavior Identification Supporting Assessment, Administered by a Physician or Other Qualified Health Professional, On Site, with the Assistance of Two or More Technicians, for a Patient Who Exhibits Destructive Behavior, Completed in an Environment that is Customized to the Patient's Behavior (15-Minute Unit)			
*0373T	Adaptive Behavior Treatment with Protocol Modification, Administered by a Physician or Other Qualified Health Professional, On Site, with the Assistance of Two or More Technicians, for a Patient Who Exhibits Destructive Behavior, Completed in an Environment that is Customized to the Patient's Behavior (15-Minute Unit)			

*\*T codes are used for patients who need two clinicians to provide services. Please provide clinical rationale for 0362T and 0373T in a separate attachment or in the attached treatment plan.*

**ADDENDUM 1**

**CHECKLIST OF CRITICAL FEATURES OF THE TREATMENT PLAN**

This document represents a list of critical features of a treatment plan. Not all components are required. Please check which components of the treatment plan will be included in the supplemental materials.

**Treatment Plan for Service Authorization:**

- Reason for Referral
- Brief Background Information
- Demographics (Name, Age, Gender, Diagnosis) Living Situation
  - a. Home/School/Work Information
  - b. Cultural Considerations for Individual and/or Family
- Clinical Interview
  - a. Information Gathering on Problem Behaviors, including Developing Operational Definitions of Primary Area of Concern and Information Regarding Possible Function of Behavior
- Review of Recent Assessments/Reports (File Review)
  - a. Any Recent Functional Behavior Assessment, Cognitive Testing, and/or Progress Reports
- Assessment Procedures and Results
  - a. Brief Description of Assessments, including their Purpose • **INDIRECT ASSESSMENTS:**
    - i. Provide Summary of Findings for Each Assessment (Graphs, Tables, or Grids)
    - **DIRECT ASSESSMENTS:** ii. Provide Summary of Findings for Each Assessment (Graphs, Tables, or Grids)
  - b. Target Behaviors are Operationally Defined, including Baseline Levels
- Treatment Plan (Focused ABA)
  - a. Treatment Setting (Home/Community/Clinic/Other)
  - b. Operational Definition for Each Behavior and Goal
  - c. Specify Behavior Management (that is, Behavior Reduction and/or Acquisition) Procedures:
    - Antecedent-Based Interventions
    - Consequence-Based Interventions
  - d. Describe Data Collection Procedures
  - e. Proposed Goals and Objectives†
  - f. Supervision Plan
  - g. Level of Risk of Harm (i.e., Current Risk of or Present Suicidal Ideation, Harm Toward Self or Others, etc.)
  - h. Barriers to Treatment (Note Any Breaks in Services Throughout the Last Authorization Period and Any Barriers to the Individual's Progress with Treatment)

**CHECKLIST OF CRITICAL FEATURES OF THE TREATMENT PLAN (CONTINUED)**

- Treatment Plan (Skill Acquisition—Comprehensive ABA)**
  - a. Treatment Setting (Home/Community/Clinic/Other)
  - b. Instructional Methods to be Used
  - c. Operational Definition for Each Skill
  - d. Describe Data Collection Procedures
  - e. Proposed Goals and Objectives†
  - f. Supervision Plan
- Parent/Caregiver Training**
  - a. Specify Parent Training Procedures
  - b. Describe Data Collection Procedures
  - c. Proposed Goals and Objectives†
- Number of Hours Requested**
  - a. Number of Hours Needed for Each Service (and Setting if Applicable)
  - b. Clinical Summary that Justifies Hours and Setting Requested
  - c. Billing Codes Requested (For Example, CPT, HCPCS)
- Coordination of Care**
- Transition Plan**
- Discharge Plan**
- Crisis Plan**

**\*Proposed Goals and Objectives — Each Goal and Objective Should Include:** a.

Current Level (Baseline)

- b. Behavior Parent/Caregiver Is Expected to Demonstrate, including Condition Under which it Must Be Demonstrated and Mastery Criteria (the Objective or Goal)
- c. Date of Introduction
- d. Estimated Date of Mastery
- e. Data on Progress
- f. Plan for Generalization
- g. Indication of Whether Goal Has Been Met, Is Progressing, or Is Regressing (include Explanations as Appropriate)
- h. Plan for Supervision

*\*Source: "Applied Behavior Analysis Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder: Practice Guidelines for Healthcare Funders and Managers" 2020 pp.23-24, CASP (The Council of Autism Service Providers) [https://assets-002.noviams.com/novi-file-uploads/casp/pdfs-and-documents/ASD\\_Guidelines/ABA-ASD-Practice-Guidelines.pdf](https://assets-002.noviams.com/novi-file-uploads/casp/pdfs-and-documents/ASD_Guidelines/ABA-ASD-Practice-Guidelines.pdf) 4*