

NOTE: Magellan considers applied behavior analysis (ABA) investigational. *However*, Magellan covers ABA when state-mandated or when ABA is specifically included in a customer's benefit plan. [View list of current plans with coverage.](#)

Outpatient Applied Behavior Analysis

Criteria for Treatment

The specified requirements for severity of need and intensity and quality of service must be met to satisfy the criteria for outpatient applied behavior analysis (ABA)*.

I. Admission - Severity of Need

Criteria A, B, C and D must be met to satisfy the criteria for severity of need.

There must be documentation of:

- A. An established DSM-IV diagnosis of a Pervasive Developmental Disorder.¹
- B. A severe challenging behavior that:
 - Presents a health or safety risk to self or others (such as self-injury, aggression toward others, destruction of property, stereotyped/repetitive behaviors, elopement, severe disruptive behavior); *or*
 - Significantly interferes with home or community activities.
- C. Less-intensive behavior treatment or other therapy has been seriously considered or has not been sufficient to reduce interfering behaviors, to increase pro-social behaviors, or to maintain desired behaviors.
- D. The patient is medically stable and does not require the 24-hour medical/nursing monitoring or procedures provided in a hospital level of care.

II. Admission – Intensity and Quality of Service

Criteria A, B, C, D, E and F must be met to satisfy the criteria for intensity and quality of service.

- A. A reasonable expectation on the part of a qualified treating health care professional² who has completed an initial evaluation of the patient, that the individual's behavior will improve significantly with ABA therapy provided by, or supervised by, a Magellan credentialed and contracted ABA provider.
- B. The treatment plan is built upon individualized goals. Objectives are measurable and tailored to the patient.
- C. Parent or caregiver training and support is incorporated into the treatment plan.

** Applies to Other Related Structured Behavioral Programs for members of AmeriHealth NJ*

- D. Interventions emphasize generalization of skills and focus on the development of spontaneous social communication, adaptive skills, and appropriate behaviors.
- E. Interventions are consistent with ABA techniques.
- F. The number of service hours necessary to effectively address the challenging behaviors is listed in the treatment plan.

Criteria for Continued Stay

III. Continued Stay

Criteria A or B **AND** C, D, E and F must be met to satisfy the criteria for continued stay:

- A. Patient continues to meet the criteria defined in above admission criteria.
- B. Appearance of new problems or symptoms that meet admission criteria.
- C. Reasonable expectation that the patient will benefit from the continuation of ABA services.
- D. The treatment plan is updated on a frequent basis.
- E. Measurable progress is documented or there is a reasonable expectation, based on the patient's clinical history and recent clinical experience, that the current treatment is of benefit to the patient, such that withdrawal of treatment will result in the patient's decompensation or the recurrence of signs or symptoms that necessitated treatment.
- F. Treatment is not making the symptoms persistently worse.

Exclusion Criteria

IV. Exclusion Criteria

ABA treatment will not be authorized for any of the following purposes:

- A. Speech therapy
- B. Occupational therapy
- C. Vocational rehabilitation
- D. Supportive respite care
- E. Recreational therapy
- F. Orientation and mobility.

Discharge Criteria

V. Discharge Criteria

Criteria A, B, C or D must be met to satisfy the criteria for discharge.

- A. No meaningful, measurable improvement has been documented in the patient's behavior(s) or for a longer period of three months of optimal treatment, and there is no reasonable expectation that termination of the current treatment would put the patient at risk for decompensation or the recurrence of signs and symptoms that necessitated treatment.
 - For changes to be "meaningful" they must be durable over time beyond the end of the actual treatment session, and generalizable outside of the treatment setting to the patient's residence and to the larger community within which the patient resides.
- B. Treatment is making the symptoms persistently worse.
- C. The patient has achieved adequate stabilization of the challenging behavior and less-intensive modes of therapy are appropriate.
- D. The patient demonstrates an inability to maintain long-term gains from the proposed plan of treatment.

¹ The DSM-IV-TR, Fourth Edition, 2000 has established a category of Pervasive Developmental Disorders, which includes: Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder, Rett's Disorder, and Pervasive Development Disorder Not Otherwise Specified. However, ABA has not been shown to be effective with Rett's Disorder; therefore, Rett's Disorder is excluded from this criterion.

² Qualified treating health care professionals are defined as a pediatrician, a provider independently licensed and credentialed by and contracted with Magellan, or as permitted by applicable state and/or federal law.