# Outpatient Services

## Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)

### Description of Services:

Medical Mutual considers ABA investigational unless it is a covered benefit or mandated by the state. ABA uses behavioral modification techniques for addressing behavioral problems found in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). Challenging behavioral problems include behaviors with such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the individual or others is threatened.

The individual ABA treatment plan is developed and directed by a licensed/certified Applied Behavioral Analyst who has specialized training in ABA and completed the certification process. The 1:1 sessions are provided by an Applied Behavioral Analysis therapist or assistant in the home, school, and/or community. The Applied Behavioral Analyst Assistants must be supervised by certified Applied Behavioral Analyst.

Applied Behavioral Analysis is an extremely intensive treatment program and occurs in a number of different settings such as school, home, agencies, and hospitals. The interventions must be uniformly and consistently applied, and behavioral data gathered, maintained and analyzed in order to evaluate the effectiveness of both the treatment plan and the interventions.

Applied Behavioral Analysis treatment does not include certification for the following services: speech therapy, occupational therapy, vocational rehabilitation, recreational therapy, physical therapy, day care, respite care, equine therapy, and educational services.

### Criteria

#### Admission Criteria

All of the following criteria are necessary for ABA treatment admission:

1. The individual has a diagnosis and behavioral symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorders (DSM-IV-TR diagnosis 299.00, 299.10, and 299.80).
2. “Severe challenging behavior” must be present when it (1) presents a safety risk to self or others or (2) significantly interferes with acceptable social behaviors.
3. Less intense forms of treatment have not been successful in decreasing the severely challenging behaviors; there is an increase in inappropriate social behaviors, or the patient is unable to maintain socially acceptable behaviors.
4. A reasonable expectation exists on the part of an Applied Behavioral Analyst, who has evaluated the individual, that the behavior will significantly improve with ABA treatment.
5. The treatment plan is developed based on the individual patient and their individual needs and that measureable objectives and interventions focus on the development of social skills and appropriate behaviors and include:
   - Individual’s strengths, family involvement, community involvement and is in the least restrictive setting.
   - Detailed documented behaviors include the frequency, rate, symptom intensity, and duration, to be modified.
   - An individual’s baseline and goals are addressed.
   - Detailed behavioral interventions, positive reinforcers, and strategies are addressed for the post ABA treatment period.
   - Includes a transition plan to home and community
6. Parent/caregiver training is included in the treatment plan with documented goals that transition the skills taught and acquired by the parent/caregiver.

#### Exclusion Criteria

Any of the following criteria/treatment are not included in the ABA level of care:

1. A medical condition or impairment that would prevent ABA treatment from being beneficial.
2. Requirement of 24-hour medical/nursing monitoring.
### Continuing Stay Criteria

All criteria listed is necessary for continuing ABA treatment:

1. **Admission criteria continuously** met for ABA treatment with documented detailed improvement in the “socially challenging behaviors”.
2. **Reasonable expectation** continues that benefits from ABA treatment will improve the challenging behaviors as documented by the ABA analyst.
3. **Individualized treatment plan that is** appropriate for the individual’s changing condition with realistic and specific goals and objectives documented in detail. The treatment plan is updated in detail at least every six months or as clinically appropriate.
4. **Progress** of the challenging behaviors **are measured and documented** on a scheduled and regular basis. **If the goals have not been accomplished** then changes to the treatment plan must be documented and implemented to address the lack of progress.
5. **Discharge planning** is part of the active treatment and is documented and implemented from the beginning of treatment.
6. **Coordination of care** with providers/caretakers, teachers, therapist and others is documented in detail. **If coordination of care is not active** then the reasons are documented.
7. **Family and/or support person(s) are actively involved** in the treatment plan as documented, or there is detailed documentation as to the reason for their lack of involvement.

### Discharge Criteria

**Discharge from ABA treatment is appropriate if the individual:**

1. **Is adequately stabilized** and the “challenging behavior” can be addressed in a less intensive level of treatment.
2. **The patient no longer meets admission criteria**
3. **The symptoms are becoming worse with treatment.**
4. **Limited or no progress toward treatment goals are being documented.**