

EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE: APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

What are we trying to do? Oregon Senate Bill 365 was passed in 2013. This bill directs the Health Evidence Review Commission (HERC) to evaluate the evidence related to applied behavior analysis (ABA) for the treatment of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in children that receive services as determined by the Prioritized List of Health Services under the Oregon Health Plan (OHP).

The history of coverage of treatment for ASD by OHP

- 1) This issue was last examined in 2008 by the Oregon Health Resources Commission. Currently, applied behavior analysis is not covered by OHP. Individuals may receive up to eight hours of treatment per month for the behaviors associated with ASD.
- 2) ASD often exists with other conditions, and these conditions have their own considerations for treatment, most of which are covered. Short-term rehabilitation and certain medicines are also covered.

What has been done so far?

- 1) HERC met August 8, 2013, discussed the process for completion of this evaluation of evidence, and referred the issue to the Evidence-based Guidelines Subcommittee (EbGS) for further discussion. On September 12, 2013, the EbGS reviewed the initial draft evaluation of evidence, heard public testimony and requested additional research by staff.
- 2) EbGS continued discussions at the November 7, 2013 meeting where it approved a draft evaluation of the evidence and preliminary conclusions that were released for public comment.
- 3) During a 30-day written public comment period that ended on December 16, 2013, 28 individuals submitted comments along with 356 citations for consideration.
- 4) Three ad hoc experts have been appointed to assist the subcommittee with its review of the evidence.
 - a. Eric Fombonne, MD (Professor, OHSU Dept. of Psychiatry)
 - b. Eric Larsson, PhD, LP, BCBA-D (Lovaas Institute for Early Intervention, Midwest Headquarters)
 - c. Katharine Elizabeth Zuckerman, MD, MPH, FAAP (Assistant Professor, OHSU Division of General Pediatrics and Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative)

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- 5) The EbGS had planned to review public comments and continue discussions at its February 7 meeting, but the meeting was cancelled due to a snowstorm. A replacement meeting was held March 20, 2014. The subcommittee reviewed public comment, continued its discussion and provided staff with general direction for drafting recommendations.
- 6) On April 24, 2014 the EbGS met once again and finalized its recommendations.
- 7) On May 8, the Value-based Benefits Subcommittee discussed potential changes to coverage under the Oregon Health Plan.

What are the draft recommendations?

- 1) During its review to date, EbGS has determined that moderate-quality evidence indicates benefit for ABA in children with ASD between the ages of 1-12. The subcommittee also adopted criteria for continued coverage based on documented progress towards treatment goals and established intensity and duration limits.
- 2) EbGS also decided to offer more limited coverage for focused ABA in individuals with autism who are over the age of 12. This coverage would be limited to dealing with specific problematic behaviors.

What happens now?

- 1) The EbGS evaluation and conclusions will go to the Value-based benefits Subcommittee (VbBS) on June 12, 2014. VbBS will use the EbGS conclusions to determine what changes may be needed to the Prioritized List of Health Services and if there are any issues that would be involved in implementing these changes in OHP.
- 2) The evidence evaluation and any changes to the Prioritized List will eventually need final approval by the full HERC, which has members from many areas of health care (doctors, nurses, chiropractic, patients, health plan administrators, and more).
- 3) Any changes to the Prioritized List affecting OHP coverage of ABA would go into effect sometime between October 1, 2014 and April 1, 2015.

How can you participate?

- 1) You can subscribe to the HERC website at www.oregon.gov/OHA/OHPR/Pages/HERC/ to receive notifications of future meetings and look at materials being discussed.
- 2) You can attend the meetings, which are open to the public, and provide verbal testimony during time set aside for public comment.