

# EVALUATION OF EVIDENCE: APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

## **What are the approved changes to OHP's coverage for treatment of autism spectrum disorders?**

The Health Evidence Review Commission (HERC) on August 14 approved a sub-committee's recommendations to:

1. Add coverage under the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) for applied behavioral analysis (ABA) in children ages 1-12 with autism spectrum disorder;
2. Offer more limited coverage for focused ABA in people with autism who are over the age of 12. This coverage would be limited to dealing with specific behaviors.

OHP coverage for ABA will begin on January 1, 2015.

The commission, which has members from many areas of health care (doctors, nurses, chiropractic, patients, health plan administrators and more), based its decision on moderate-quality evidence. The recommendation came from its Value-based Benefits Subcommittee.

It also adopted criteria for continued coverage of ABA in cases where there is documented progress toward treatment goals, and it provided information on appropriate intensity and duration of therapy.

## **Why did HERC undertake this process?**

Oregon Senate Bill 365, which was passed in 2013, mandated coverage for ABA treatments for commercial health plans starting in January 2015. This bill also directed HERC to evaluate the evidence related to ABA and consider whether it should be used to treat children who are covered by the Oregon Health Plan.

## **What is the history of OHP coverage of treatments for autism spectrum disorder?**

1. This issue was last examined in 2008 by the Oregon Health Resources Commission. Currently, ABA is not covered by OHP. Individuals may receive up to eight hours of non-ABA treatment per month for behaviors associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
2. ASD often exists with other conditions. Many treatments for these conditions are covered. Short-term rehabilitation and certain medicines also are covered.

## **What was the process for HERC's decision?**

1. The commission referred the issue to its Evidence-based Guidelines Subcommittee after discussing it on August 8, 2013. The subcommittee reviewed a draft evaluation of evidence, heard public testimony and requested additional research by staff, at its meeting on September 12, 2013.

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2. Three experts were appointed to assist the subcommittee with its review of the evidence. They were:
  - a. Eric Fombonne, M.D., professor, Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) Department of Psychiatry;
  - b. Eric Larsson, Ph.D., L.P., BCBA-D, Lovaas Institute for Early Intervention, Midwest Headquarters;
  - c. Katharine Elizabeth Zuckerman, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, assistant professor, OHSU Division of General Pediatrics and Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative;
3. At its November 7, 2013, meeting, the subcommittee approved a draft evaluation of the evidence and preliminary conclusions, and released them for public comment.
4. During a 30-day public comment period that ended on December 16, 2013, 28 individuals submitted written comments, including 356 research citations, for consideration.
5. The subcommittee reviewed public comment, continued its discussion and provided staff with general direction for drafting recommendations at its meeting March 20, 2014.
6. On April 24, 2014 the subcommittee finalized its recommendations.
7. In June, a separate subcommittee, the Value-based Benefits Subcommittee (VbBS) recommended changes in OHP coverage of autism spectrum disorder. The changes did not include intensity and duration limits recommended by the Evidence-based Guidelines Subcommittee.
8. Final recommendations were completed by the subcommittee on June 12, 2014. HERC completed its review at its August 14, 2014, meeting.

### **How can I participate or get updates on HERC's activities?**

You can subscribe at the [HERC website](http://www.oregon.gov/OHA/OHPR/Pages/HERC/) at [www.oregon.gov/OHA/OHPR/Pages/HERC/](http://www.oregon.gov/OHA/OHPR/Pages/HERC/) to receive notifications of future meetings and look at materials being discussed.

You can attend the meetings, which are open to the public, and speak during time set aside for public comment.