

Executive Summary

Applied Behavior Analysis Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder: Practice Guidelines for Healthcare Funders and Managers (2nd edition)

The purpose of this document is to introduce PerformCare’s practice guidelines for providers utilizing applied behavior analysis (ABA) as an evidence-based treatment for children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental and behavioral conditions. This document can inform clinical decision-making regarding the use of ABA to treat medically necessary conditions so as to develop, maintain, or restore, to the maximum extent practicable, the functioning of individuals with developmental and behavioral conditions in ways that are effective. These practice guidelines are meant to provide behavioral health providers with useful, quick reference tools when providing ABA to children and adolescents. They are intended to extend, not replace, sound clinical judgment. In particular, these adopted guidelines do not supersede the responsibility of the treating provider to remain current and informed on key regulatory and professional practice when making important treatment decisions.

PerformCare has adopted the Council of Autism Service Providers (CASP) *Applied Behavior Analysis Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder: Practice Guidelines for Healthcare Funders and Managers* (2nd edition) (2014, 2020). The following guide is designed to help providers — such as those who provide Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS) — practitioners, and interested readers become familiar with key features of the documents and use sections that will be most useful to them. IBHS provides multiple evidence-based treatments and supports for children, youth, and young adults under the age of 21 with mental, emotional, and behavioral health needs in the homes, schools, and communities. One category of IBHS service is ABA, which can be provided for children, youth, and young adults with a behavioral health disorder diagnosis.

The practice guideline was developed on the best available scientific evidence and expert clinical opinion regarding the use of ABA as a behavioral health treatment for individuals diagnosed with ASD. These standards are offered as an informational resource that should be considered in consultation with parents, behavior analysts, regulators, and health care funders and managers. The current guidelines are specific to ABA as a behavioral health treatment of ASD. Nevertheless, the practice guidelines support that ABA has also been demonstrated to be effective in the treatment of symptoms of a variety of conditions, including severe destructive behavior, substance abuse, dementia, pediatric feeding disorders, and traumatic brain injury, among others.

The guidelines are intended to be a brief and user-friendly introduction to the delivery of ABA services.