



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT  
OF COMMUNITY HEALTH

# Autism Spectrum Disorder Therapy

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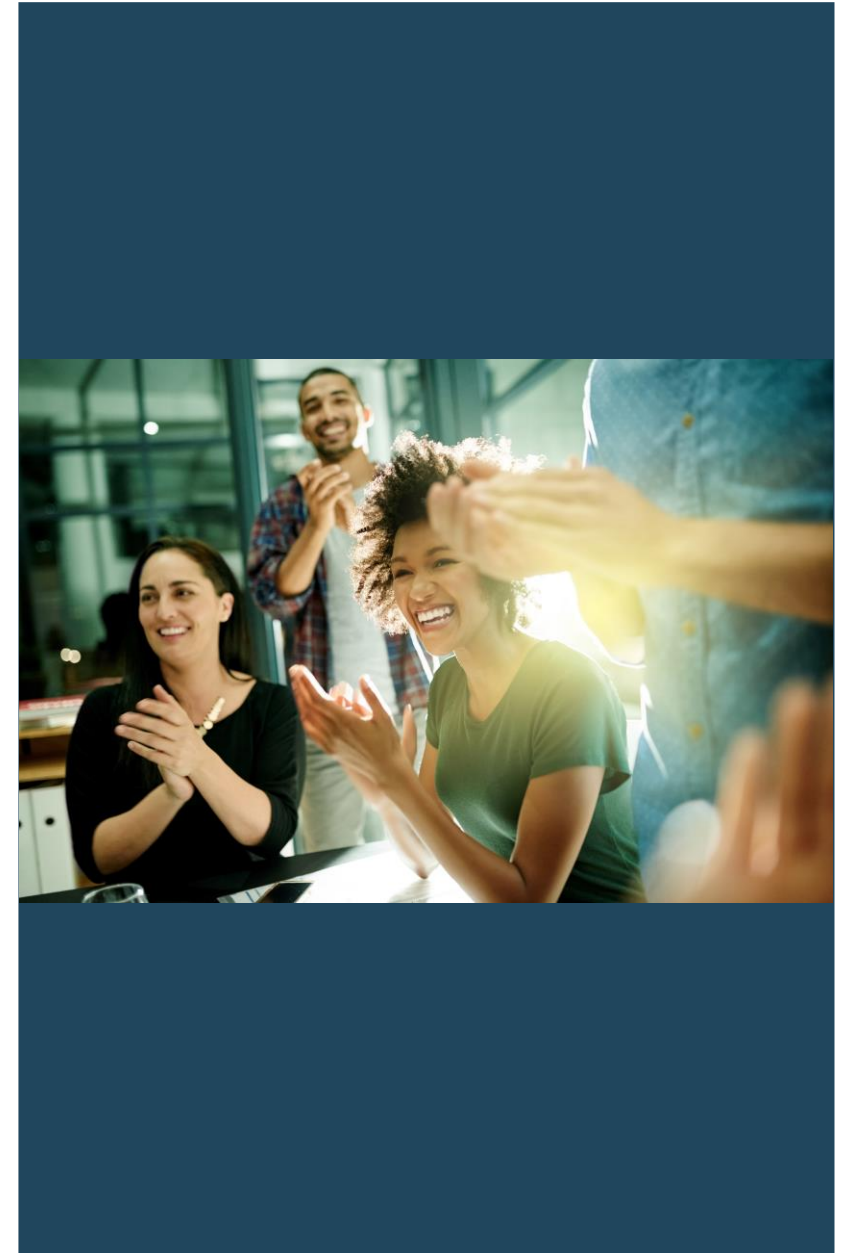




GEORGIA DEPARTMENT  
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# Our Purpose

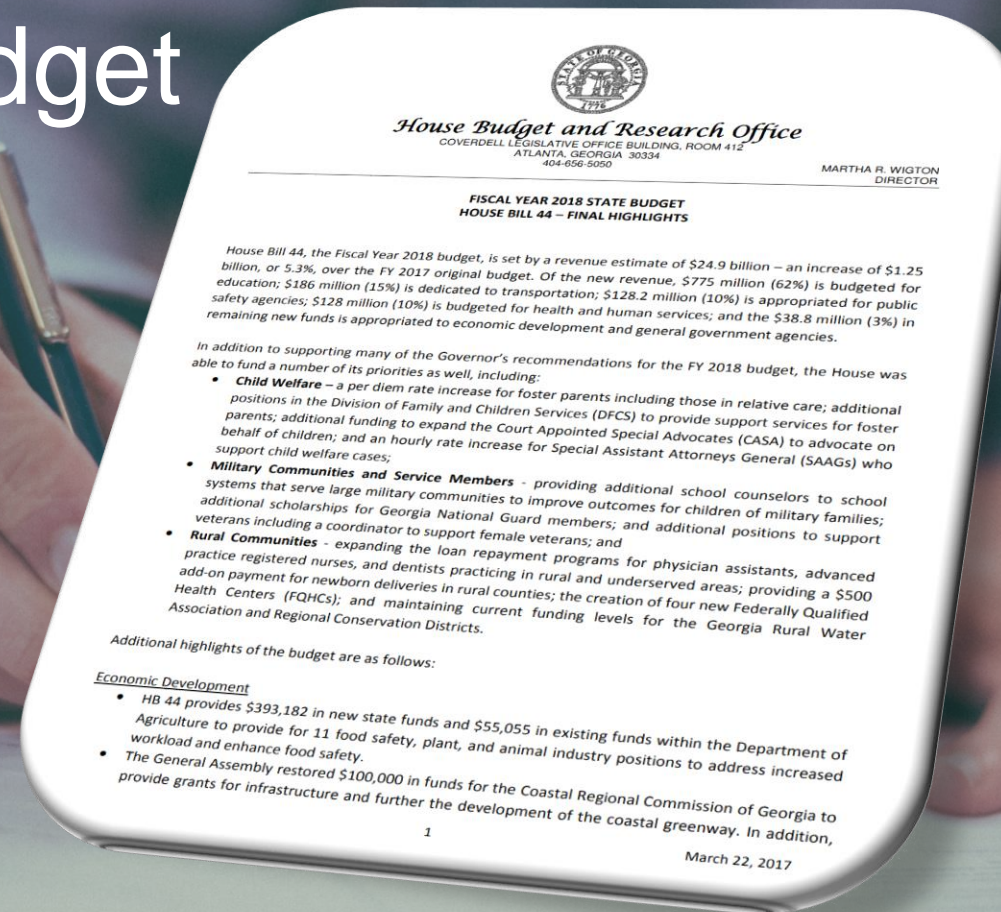
Shaping the future of *A Healthy Georgia* by improving access and ensuring quality to strengthen the communities we serve.



# Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- 1:64 children (ages 0 to 21) in Georgia have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
  - 1.1 million children in GA on Medicaid younger than 21 years of age
    - Estimated 17,000 children with Autism Spectrum Disorder enrolled in GA Medicaid
- Spring 2017: Governor's Budget Proposal/Legislative Approval
- Initiated Tri-department Planning Initiative
  - Department of Community Health
  - Department of Public Health
  - Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities
  - Partner Informants include DHS and DOE

# FY 2018-19 Budget



# Oversight Agencies

- Beginning in State Fiscal Year 2018, the legislature aligned funds for services and supports to individuals with ASD), ages 0 through 20.
- The three state agencies named below were charged with enhancing the state's capacity to support individuals with ASD and their families/caregivers through several initiatives.



Department of  
Public Health

Early Identification and  
Intervention Services



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Department of  
Community Health

Adaptive Behavior  
Assessment and Treatment



Department of Behavioral  
Health and Developmental  
Disabilities

ASD Crisis Support Services



# Treatment for ASD

- **Adaptive Behavior Services (ABS)**
  - Behavioral therapy -- foundation for ASD treatment
  - Social skills development
  - Not available through Medicaid in GA prior to 1/1/2018
- **Non-behavioral therapies**
  - Speech-language therapy
  - Occupational therapy
  - Physical therapy
- Medical and psychiatric treatment for associated conditions

# ABS Providers

- Behavior Analysis is the scientific study of principles of learning and behavior. Practitioners of behavior analysis are qualified to provide services to address organizational functioning, skill deficits (e.g., communication, adaptive behavior), and problem behavior (e.g., aggression, self-injurious behavior), for examples.
- Behavioral Analysts are Certified nationally by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board.

<https://bacb.com/about-behavior-analysis/>

## **BCBA-D: Board Certified Behavior Analyst – Doctoral Level**

A doctoral level practitioner qualified to diagnose and provide direct services and supervise BCBAs

**BCBA: Board Certified Behavior Analyst** Masters/graduate level independent practitioners who provide behavior-analytic services. May supervise the work of Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts, Registered Behavior Technicians, and others who implement behavior-analytic interventions.

## **BCaBA: Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst**

Bachelor's level practitioner, must be supervised by BCBA/BCBA-D; can supervise Registered Behavior Technicians

## **Registered Behavior Technicians**

Paraprofessional who implements the service plan under supervision of Certified Behavior Analyst

Recommendations of the multi-agency state autism collaborative

# Benefit Coverage & Design

## Inputs

- CMS Guidance (June 2014)
- Advocate and provider subject matter experts
- Autism Plan for Georgia
- Governor's Budget Recommendation and Legislative Appropriations

## Guiding Principles

- Leverage existing infrastructure
- Open ABS procedure codes
- Phase in multiple access points
- Invest in early intervention
- Expand qualified provider network through enrollment of BCBAs



# Benefit Coverage Framework

## Coding and Pricing

- **Code Selection**
  - Other states
  - CMS proposed codes
  - Additions based on subject matter expert input
- **Pricing**
  - Model existing CMS-approved behavioral health reimbursement structure (Medicaid Rehabilitation Option)
  - Tiered rates based on provider credentials and other criteria
- **Telemedicine**

# Tiered Reimbursement

## Tiered Reimbursement Levels

- Level 1 – Physician, Psychiatrist
- Level 2 – Psychologist, BCBA-D
- Level 3 – BCBA
- Level 4 – BCaBA or Master's level Behavior Analyst without certification
- Level 5 – Registered Behavioral Technician (RBT)

# ASD Services

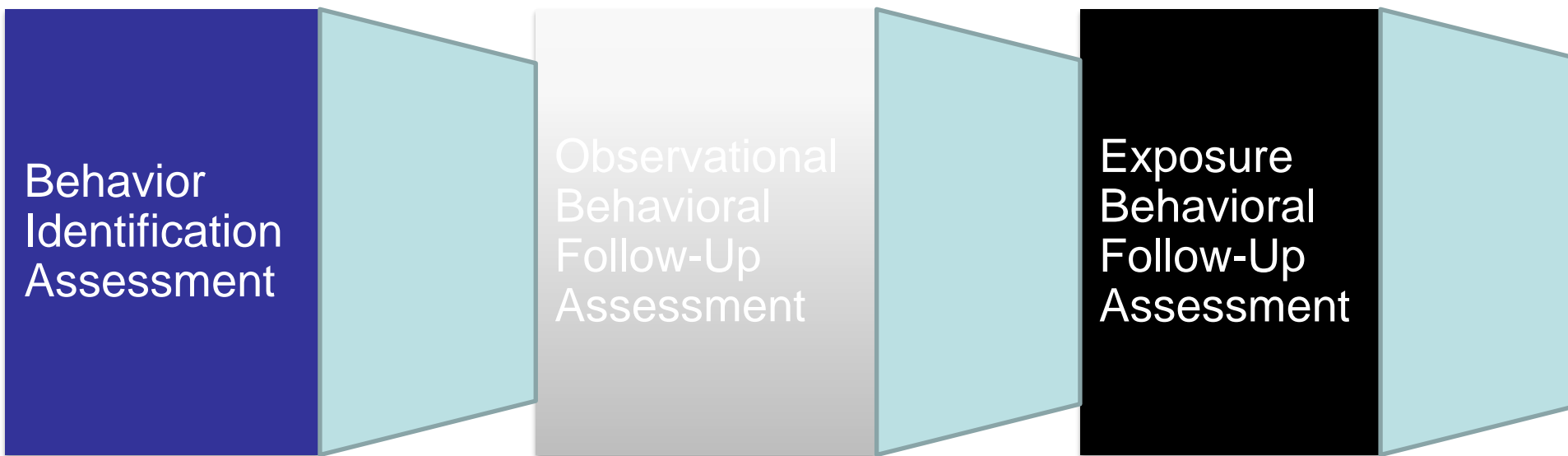
## **ASD Adaptive Behavior Services (ABS) Outpatient Benefit**

- Managed by the Department of Community Health
  - Ages 0-20
  - Valid and verified ASD diagnosis required
  - Services must meet medical necessity
  - Prior Authorization for services is required
  - Authorizations are in 6-month increments
  - Range of practitioners can provide services
  - Reimbursement is based on the level of education/qualifications of the practitioners (i.e. U1 - U5)
  - Services can be provided via telemedicine (i.e. GT modifier)
  - Services can be provided either in-clinic or out-of-clinic (homes, school, etc.) (i.e. U6 - U7)



# Georgia Department of Community Health

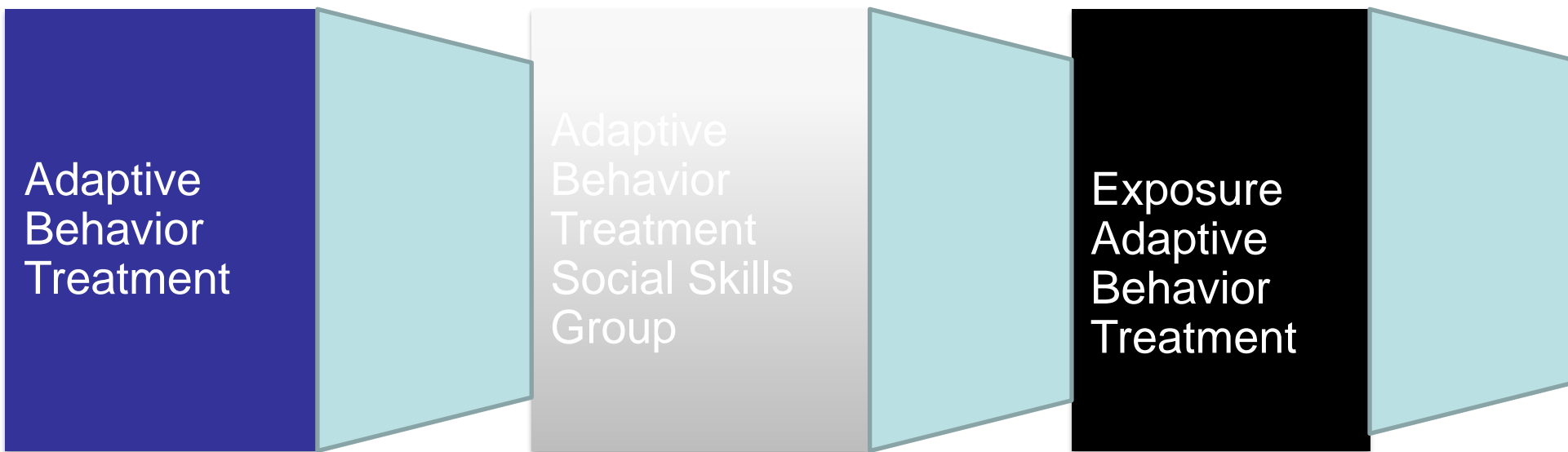
## Services: Assessment





# Georgia Department of Community Health

## Services: Treatment



# Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)

## Early Screening and Assessment As Treatment

- As noted, the increasing prevalence of ASD among young people has magnified the focus of and demand on its treatment.
- Timely assessment of ASD is fundamental to effectively treating it
- Effective treatment can increase the number of dependency-free life years (DFLY) regardless the ASD level of the young person
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children are screened for ASD at their 18 and 24-month Well-Child visits

*<https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>*



# ABA, Cont.

## More Detail on ABA—Overview

- Is an evidence-based practice
- ABA is based on the science of learning and behavior
- Has been in use since the 1960s
- Used to increase language and communication skills
- Improve attention, focus, social skills, memory, and academics
- Decrease problem behaviors
- Delivered by a BCBA and Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)

*<https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>*

# ABA, Cont.

## More Detail on ABA--Overview

ABA is a flexible treatment, meaning it...

- Can be adapted to meet the needs of each unique person
- Provided in many different locations – at home, at school, and in the community
- Teaches skills that are useful in everyday life
- Can involve one-to-one teaching or group instruction

*<https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>*

# ABA, Cont.

## More Detail on ABA—Assessment and Treatment

- ABA begins with BCBAs doing a detailed assessment of each person's skills and preferences.
- They then write specific treatment goals, including family goals and preferences
- Treatment goals are based on the age and ability level of the person with ASD
- Treatment goals can include:
  - Communication and language
  - Social skills
  - Self-care (such as showering and toileting)
  - Play and leisure
  - Motor skills
  - Learning and academic skills

*<https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>*

# ABA, Cont.

## More Detail on ABA—Data Collection During Treatment

- BCBA and RBTs collect data in each therapy session to monitor the person's progress
- Types of data include frequency; rate; duration; latency; antecedent, behavior, consequence data; and interval recording
- The behavior analyst regularly meets with family members and program staff to review data and progress

*<https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>*

# ABA, Cont.

## More Detail on ABA--Techniques

- Positive reinforcement is one of the primary techniques in ABA
- ABC
- The goal of ABA is to help individuals become more independent and successful in the short term as well as in the future

*<https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>*

# ABA, Cont.

## More Detail on ABA—Shape and Philosophy of ABA

- ABA techniques can be directed by the instructor or the person with autism or other diseases
- Caregivers receive training to support learning and skill practice throughout the day
- The person with autism can have many opportunities to learn and practice ABA skills each day
- Focus on positive social interactions and enjoyable learning
- ABA can be effective for all ages

*<https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>*



# ABA, Cont.

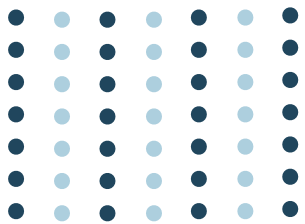
## More Detail on ABA—Types of ABA

- Comprehensive ABA:
  - Provides intensive, individualized treatment for individuals with significant behavioral challenges.
  - Targets a broad range of skills, including communication, social interaction, and adaptive behaviors.
  - Typically involves 30-40 hours of therapy per week.
- Focused ABA:
  - Focuses on specific, targeted behaviors or skills.
  - May address challenges such as aggression, tantrums, or communication difficulties.
  - Involves less intensive therapy than comprehensive ABA.

# ABA, Cont.

## More Detail on ABA—Types of ABA

- Discrete Trial Training (DTT)
  - A structured, highly repetitive teaching method that breaks down skills into small steps.
  - Uses positive reinforcement to reward correct responses.
- Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT)
  - Focuses on developing core skills that influence a wide range of behaviors.
  - Emphasizes play-based activities and natural interactions.
- Verbal Behavior Intervention (VBI)
  - Focuses on improving communication and language skills.
  - Analyzes and teaches the functions of verbal behavior, such as requests, labels, and conversations.
- Natural Environment Teaching (NET)
  - Uses everyday environments and activities to teach skills and generalize learned behaviors.
- Other Types
  - ABA can also include other techniques, such as task analysis, chaining, and prompting
  - Intensive Behavioral Interventions (IBI) and Early Intensive Behavioral Interventions (EIBI) are the most widely used sub-modalities of ABA for when children are diagnosed and enter treatment early.



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**THANK YOU!**

**QUESTIONS /**

**COMMENTS?**

