



# TRICARE® Autism Care Demonstration

Learn about coverage of services for beneficiaries diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder

TRICARE covers clinically necessary and appropriate services for beneficiaries diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ASD affects essential human behaviors such as social interaction, the ability to communicate ideas and feelings, imagination, and relationship formation. TRICARE covered services must be clinically necessary and appropriate. These include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, psychological services, psychological testing, and prescription drugs.

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) services are a benefit covered under the TRICARE Comprehensive Autism Care Demonstration (ACD). This is separate from the TRICARE medical benefit that provides coverage of the medical services listed above. ABA services are a set of techniques based on behavior modification principles, like positive reinforcement, to increase or decrease targeted behaviors. ABA services can help develop skills like language and social interaction. These services can also help to decrease maladaptive behaviors. TRICARE covers clinically necessary and appropriate ABA services that target the core symptoms of ASD.

## AUTISM CARE DEMONSTRATION ELIGIBILITY

ABA services are covered under the ACD for all qualifying family members of active duty service members (ADSMs), retirees, and certain National Guard and Reserve members. To qualify, your child must also:

- Be enrolled in a TRICARE health plan
- Be diagnosed with ASD by an approved ASD-diagnosing provider, such as a primary care manager, nurse practitioner, psychologist, a physician board certified or

## Going to see a new ABA provider?

### Call your regional contractor

*Remember, ABA services must be pre-authorized. Your regional contractor can help you find providers.*

board eligible in developmental-behavioral pediatrics, or provider that would otherwise meet TRICARE authorization as defined in the ACD policy.

If the child's sponsor is an ADSM (unless waived in specific situations), the child must be enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) of the sponsor's service and be registered in the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO).

EFMP works to help military families with special needs during the duty assignment process and after families have arrived at their new installation. Each service branch has its own EFMP and enrollment process. Contact your service branch or visit [www.militaryonesource.mil/efmp](http://www.militaryonesource.mil/efmp) for more information. ECHO provides supplemental services to ADFMs with qualifying psychological or physical disabilities. Visit [www.tricare.mil/echo](http://www.tricare.mil/echo) to learn more.

## HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Once your child is diagnosed with ASD by an approved ASD-diagnosing provider:

1. The provider must send a referral to your regional contractor with the ASD diagnosis and required supporting documentation.

2. After all eligibility and enrollment criteria is met, beneficiaries entering the program after Oct. 1, 2021 will be assigned an autism services navigator (ASN) who will coordinate services into a comprehensive care plan. If your child entered the ACD before Oct. 1, 2021 and meets eligibility requirements, you'll continue to work with case management services, if applicable.

## ABA SERVICES RECEIVED UNDER THE AUTISM CARE DEMONSTRATION

- Your regional contractor will issue an authorization for an ABA assessment to an authorized ABA provider.
- All outcome measures must be completed prior to issuing a treatment authorization.
- Beneficiaries who were assigned an ASN must complete a comprehensive care plan within 90 days.
- Once the regional contractor approves the treatment plan, they will issue an authorization for six months of ABA services under the ACD.
- The pre-authorization for ABA services includes the name of an authorized and available ABA provider. To request a provider other than the one listed on your authorization—or if you aren't offered care within the 28-day specialty care access standard—contact your regional contractor.

Your child's authorized ABA supervisor will:

- Complete an initial ABA assessment of your child
- Develop an individual treatment plan identifying the hours of ABA recommended services. The contractor will only authorize clinically necessary and appropriate services
- Work with your child and provide ABA services or supervise an assistant behavior analyst or behavior technician who provides these services
- Help parents and caregivers learn and practice ABA techniques
- Reevaluate your child every six months to determine progress and update the treatment plan



## Key Terms

**applied behavior analysis (ABA):** The design, implementation, and evaluation of planned changes to an individual's environment that will help foster improvements in behavior. ABA services are used to help address behavioral challenges for those with autism spectrum disorder.

**ABA sole provider model:** Your child gets all ABA services from authorized ABA supervisors.

**ABA tiered provider model:** Your child gets ABA services from a team of providers led by an authorized ABA supervisor. This model isn't available overseas.

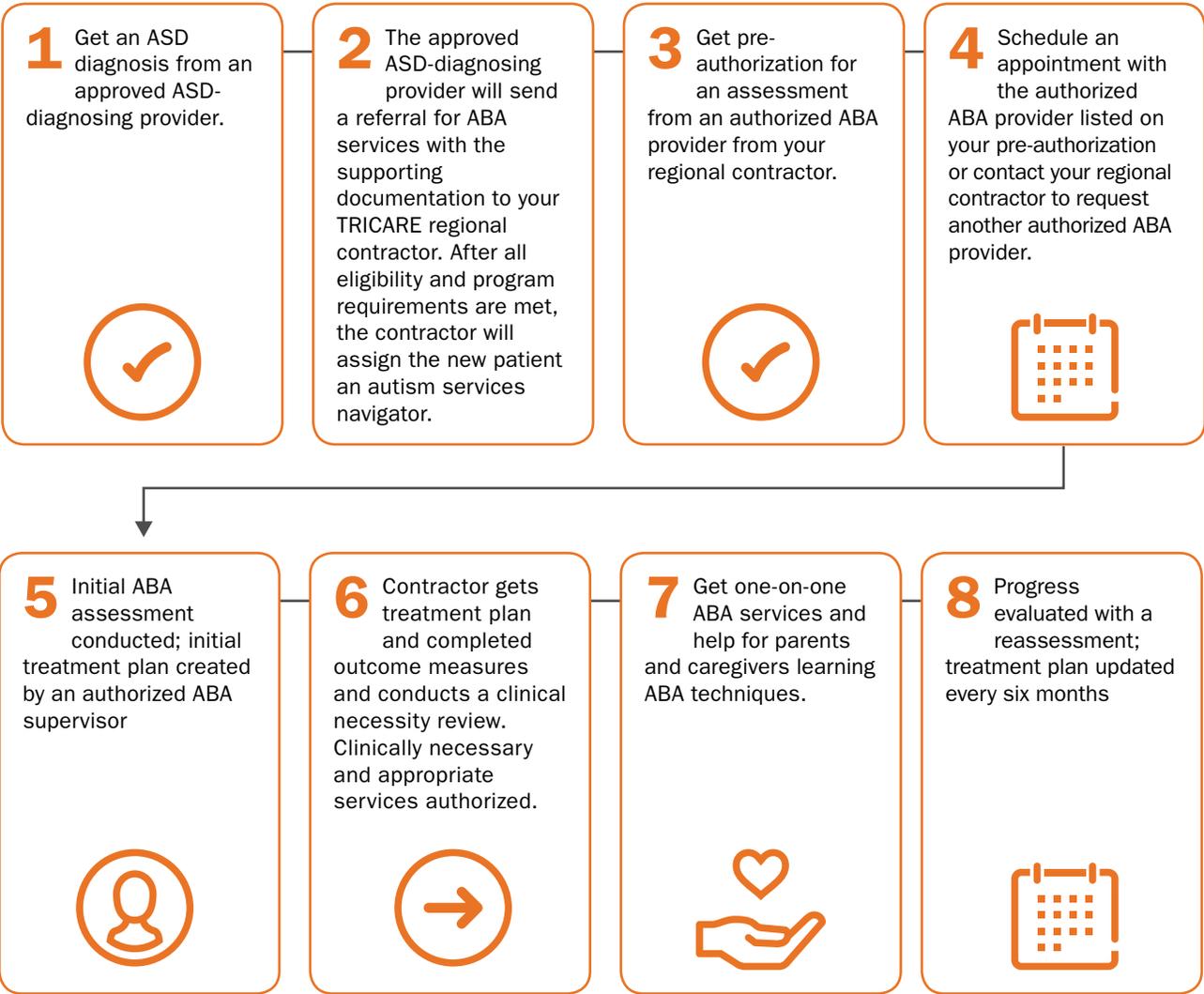
**autism services navigator (ASN):** Every new ACD participant on or after Oct. 1, 2021 will be assigned an ASN. The ASN will develop a comprehensive care plan, improve care transition support, and provide greater care coordination support.

**autism spectrum disorder (ASD):** A neurodevelopmental disorder that impairs a person's ability to communicate and interact with others. It also includes restricted repetitive behaviors, interests and activities, such as doing the same action over and over again, insisting on a certain routine or ritual or obsessing on a topic. These issues can cause significant impairment in social, occupational, and other areas of functioning. The word "spectrum" in ASD refers to the wide range of symptoms and severity.

**authorized ABA supervisor:** A master's-degree level or higher certified behavior analyst or other TRICARE-authorized ABA provider practicing within the scope of his or her state licensure or state certification. The ACD covers certain ABA services given by an authorized ABA supervisor, such as ABA assessment, treatment plan development and updates, and direct one-on-one ABA services.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## HOW TO GET ABA SERVICES UNDER THE AUTISM CARE DEMONSTRATION



## APPROVED ASD-DIAGNOSING PROVIDERS (Effective Oct. 1, 2021)

**Primary care health care providers** with the following specialties:

- Family practice
- Pediatrics
- Pediatric nurse practitioners

**Board certified or board eligible physicians** in the following disciplines:

- Licensed clinical psychology, doctoral level
- Doctors of Nursing Practice, meeting certain criteria
- Developmental behavioral pediatrics
- Neurodevelopmental pediatrics
- Pediatric neurology
- Adult or child psychiatry

## PAYING FOR ABA UNDER THE AUTISM CARE DEMONSTRATION

You pay the copayment or cost-share for your TRICARE program (for example, TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select) for all ABA services. All ABA services rendered on one day will be subject to one copayment. For more information, visit [www.tricare.mil/costs](http://www.tricare.mil/costs).

**Note:** These amounts apply to your calendar year (Jan. 1–Dec. 31) catastrophic cap.

There aren't yearly or lifetime caps on the amount of ABA services TRICARE covers. This means your child won't reach a benefit maximum and have to stop receiving clinically necessary and appropriate ABA services.



### Key Terms

(Continued from page 2)

**assistant behavior analyst:** A supervised bachelor's-degree-level behavior specialist who provides ABA services under the supervision of an authorized ABA supervisor. The ACD covers certain services provided by the assistant behavior analyst, such as duties delegated by an authorized ABA supervisor. Assistant behavior analysts can't practice independently.

**behavior technician:** A supervised ABA team member who meets specified training requirements and can provide one-on-one ABA services under the supervision of an authorized ABA supervisor.

## ONGOING ABA REQUIREMENTS (TWO-YEAR CYCLE)

Your child will get ABA services at the frequency approved in his or her individual treatment plan. There are no yearly or lifetime caps on the amount of ABA services TRICARE covers.



### Initial ABA assessment and treatment authorization

Before a two-year cycle of ABA services begin for your child, your regional contractor must issue an authorization. See chart on page 3.



### Every 12 months

- Your ABA provider or other authorized provider completes the respective outcome measures.



### Every six months

Once your child receives a treatment authorization from your regional contractor, they begin a six-month period. To have the regional contractor authorize another six-month period:

- For new beneficiaries entering the ACD on or after Oct. 1, 2021, your autism services navigator updates the comprehensive care plan.
- Your ABA provider or other authorized provider completes the respective outcome measures.

**Note:** To avoid gaps in care, your provider must submit the treatment plan as early as 60 days before the end of each six-month period, but no later than 30 days before the end.



### Every 24 months

- A new referral and DSM-5 checklist documentation for ongoing ABA services is required. Beneficiaries who entered the ACD before Oct. 1, 2021 will need to submit the validated assessment tool one time to update eligibility during their next two-year referral cycle.

## ABA SERVICES IN U.S. TERRITORIES AND OTHER OVERSEAS LOCATIONS

U.S. territories fall under the TRICARE Overseas Program (TOP). Tiered services (for example, the use of assistants and behavior technicians) are only authorized in U.S. territories. Resources are limited overseas. The ABA sole delivery model provided by board certified behavior analysts is the only model that's reimbursed.

Contact the TOP contractor for help finding an ABA provider or for any questions on getting ABA services overseas.



## Take the Publications Survey

Use the QR code to the left or click on "Publications Satisfaction Survey" at [www.tricare.mil/publications](http://www.tricare.mil/publications).

## LOOKING FOR More Information?

GO TO [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil)

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### TRICARE East Region

Humana Military  
1-800-444-5445  
[www.tricare-east.com](http://www.tricare-east.com)  
[HumanaMilitary.com](http://HumanaMilitary.com)

W

### TRICARE West Region

Health Net Federal Services, LLC  
1-844-866-WEST (1-844-866-9378)  
[www.tricare-west.com](http://www.tricare-west.com)

O

### TRICARE Overseas Program (TOP)

International SOS  
Government Services, Inc.  
[www.tricare-overseas.com](http://www.tricare-overseas.com)  
For toll-free contact information, visit this website.

### TOP Regional Call Centers

**Eurasia-Africa**  
+44-20-8762-8384 (overseas)  
1-877-678-1207 (stateside)  
[tricarelon@internationalsos.com](mailto:tricarelon@internationalsos.com)

**Latin America and Canada**  
+1-215-942-8393 (overseas)  
1-877-451-8659 (stateside)  
[tricarephl@internationalsos.com](mailto:tricarephl@internationalsos.com)

**Pacific (Singapore):**  
+65-6339-2676 (overseas)  
1-877-678-1208 (stateside)  
[sin.tricare@internationalsos.com](mailto:sin.tricare@internationalsos.com)

**Pacific (Sydney):**  
+61-2-9273-2710 (overseas)  
1-877-678-1209 (stateside)  
[sydricare@internationalsos.com](mailto:sydricare@internationalsos.com)

### Exceptional Family Member Program

[www.militaryonesource.mil/efmp](http://www.militaryonesource.mil/efmp)

### TRICARE Extended Care Health Option

[www.tricare.mil/echo](http://www.tricare.mil/echo)

### Autism Care Demonstration

[www.tricare.mil/autism](http://www.tricare.mil/autism)

### milConnect Website

Update DEERS Information  
<https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil>

### An Important Note About TRICARE Program Information

At the time of publication, this information is current. It is important to remember that TRICARE policies and benefits are governed by public law and federal regulations. Changes to TRICARE programs are continually made as public law and/or federal regulations are amended. **Military hospital and clinic guidelines and policies may be different than those outlined in this publication.** For the most recent information, contact your TRICARE regional contractor or local military hospital or clinic. The TRICARE program meets the minimum essential coverage requirement under the Affordable Care Act.

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