

Research-Based Behavioral Health Treatment Guidance

Also referred to as Applied Behavior Analysis

Please note the following Vaya Health (Vaya) guidance for Research-based Behavioral Health Treatment (RB-BHT), also referred to as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy.

NC Medicaid Clinical Coverage Policy 8F (adapted)

RB-BHT services are research-based behavioral intervention services that prevent or minimize the disabilities and behavioral challenges associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and promote, to the extent practicable, the adaptive functioning of a beneficiary. RB-BHT demonstrates clinical efficacy in treating ASD, prevents or minimizes the adverse effects of ASD, and promotes, to the maximum extent possible, the functioning of a beneficiary.

CPT 97155 Definition

Adaptive behavior treatment with protocol modification administered by physician or other qualified health care professional, which may include simultaneous direction of technician, face-to-face with one patient, each 15 minutes

NC Medicaid Bulletin (May 2019)

Program Modification vs. Supervision: 97155 covers adaptive behavior treatment with protocol modification where the Licensed Qualified Autism Professional (LQASP) or Certified Autism Professional (C-QP) resolves one or more problems with the protocol (for example, evaluating progress, progressing programs, modeling modifications, probing skills). As of Jan. 1, 2019, supervision of the Assistant Behavior Analyst and Behavior Technician, such as treatment fidelity checks and feedback, is not covered. The oversight and supervision of Behavior Technicians and is required as clinically appropriate and in accordance with the Behavior Analyst Certification Board guidelines and ethics but are not billable.

Vaya Provider Communication Bulletin, 2022-23 Issue 37 (Jan. 26, 2023)

This bulletin clarifies that 97155 is not intended for supervision of the Assistant Behavior Analyst and Behavior Technician, such as treatment fidelity checks and feedback, and cites the May 2019 NC Medicaid Bulletin. The Vaya communication notes Vaya will routinely approve 97155 hours up to 10% of approved 97153 (Adaptive Behavior Treatment by Protocol) hours and will review any requests for more than 10% for medical necessity.

The Council of Autism Service Providers (CASP), “Applied Behavior Analysis Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder, Third Edition” (April 29, 2024)

This document includes the following guidance:

- “Although the number of case supervision hours provided must be responsive to individual patient needs, one to two hours of case supervision for every 10 hours (1–2:10) of direct treatment is the general standard of care.”
- “A ratio closer to 1:10 may be appropriate if fewer adjustments to protocols are anticipated for a specific patient, as part of a planned step down in services, or if the main goal of treatment is to maintain the current levels of functioning.”