



AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN PRESENTS

# MiNavigator

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[www.AAoMI.org](http://www.AAoMI.org)

Help. Hope. Answers. Today.



## What to Expect from a Tiered Model of ABA and Why is it Important

Contributed by Joshua Plavnik, PhD, Michigan State University  
Associate Professor Department of Counseling, Educational Psychology, and Special Education

Approximately 1 in 68 children in the United States have an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and demonstrate difficulties in social interaction, communication, and adaptive living. Research has shown that intensive psychoeducational intervention based on principles of applied behavior analysis can promote significant gains across a range of adaptive skills, particularly if this intervention begins early, lasts approximately two years, and is delivered more than 25 hours per week. Applied behavior analysis, or ABA, is the scientific application of principles of behavior to improve socially significant behaviors. It is the most empirically supported treatment for individuals with ASD and, when properly administered, can lead to profound improvement in quality of life.

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The rapid increase in the incidence of ASD over the last 30 years, along with the dissemination of effective behavioral intervention, has created an increased demand for providers with behavior analytic expertise to support children and families dealing with autism. Michigan is no exception to this demand as the authorization of legislation requiring insurance to cover ABA treatment in 2012 led to a prolific increase in the number of Board Certified Behavior Analysis (BCBAs) and BCBA training programs in the state. Compared to just two universities prior to the 2012 insurance legislation, ten universities in Michigan now prepare Masters level behavior analysts, or BCBAs. This increase has been essential to support a qualified and competent workforce to support individuals with ASD in Michigan. However, it means that many of our State's ABA providers are likely beginning their careers and it is important they continue to receive opportunities for training and professional development to ensure the quality of ABA delivered to individuals with ASD.

A new BCBA often joins an agency that provides a tiered model of ABA. The tiered model is essential to deliver ABA treatment in a cost-feasible manner. Providers who are sufficiently trained to assess behavioral symptoms associated with ASD and develop and monitor the interventions for those symptoms are BCBAs. These are masters or doctoral level clinicians who've completed graduate-level coursework and fieldwork in ABA. In order to structure intensive ABA programs for children with ASD, the BCBA typically supervises a team of Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) working with approximately 6-12 children with ASD, or possibly more if less intensive cases. RBTs are direct line staff who carry out the procedures developed by the BCBA. The BCBA provides ongoing supervision and support, in the amount of approximately 2 hours per every 10 hours of treatment, to each RBT. This tiered model of ABA allows for a feasible cost structure as RBTs are paid substantially less than BCBAs, but BCBA involvement is a critical component of a successful program. In some cases, a BCBA might also supervise a bachelor's level Assistant Behavior Analysis (BCaBA) who oversees programming for his or her own small caseload of children.

BCBAs may want to consider employment opportunities that will provide them with continued supervision and professional development.

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The tiered model of ABA is appropriate for ensuring effective supervision of RBTs delivering programming to individuals with ASD. However, in order to ensure optimal quality of programming and ongoing training for BCBA's and RBTs, many high-quality ABA agencies extend this tiered model upward, wherein an advanced or doctoral level BCBA (BCAB-D) supervises several BCBA's. In addition, there may be several experienced BCBA's who can provide professional mentorship to new BCBA's. In this way, an effective ABA agency functions much like a medical practice wherein medical doctors have varied experience and those with the most experience, partners, oversee medical operations of the practice. In large agencies, serving many children with ASD, one would expect to find several advanced BCBA-Ds who together ensure the practice delivers procedures as described in the literature, maintains the safety of clients and staff, provides agency-wide professional development, and creates a strong ethical culture.

As the demand for ABA continues, and future practitioners join the workforce, it is important for agencies to build business structures that provide multiple tiers of supervision. These tiers should address the professional development needs of BCBA's, as well as RBTs. And new BCBA's may want to consider employment opportunities that will provide them with continued supervision and professional development.





# Protection of Personal Health Information in ABA Programs

Contributed by Dr. Lori Warner and Dr. Lesly Hendershot, Ted Lindsay Foundation  
HOPE Center, Beaumont Children's

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst or BCBA® is a nationally-certified provider of behavior analysis services and is bound by a stringent ethics code. National, state, and local regulations also govern the behavior of behavior analysts when providing services. In this article, we review the best practice guidelines for maintaining confidentiality of data and medical records generated in behavioral therapy services.

**What is HIPAA?** HIPAA stands for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. The act went into effect on April 14, 2003 and contains a variety of rules regarding individuals' right to access one's own medical record, procedures for sharing medical record information, as well as how health care providers must safeguard information in the medical record.

**What is PHI?** Protected Health Information, or PHI includes any information that could identify an individual. For example, full face photos or video recordings, your name, or your fingerprint would all be forms of PHI. Not all health information is protected, and "de-identified information" is often used in research.

**Who must follow the HIPAA guidelines?** All health plans and health care providers are bound by HIPAA. When delivering behavioral therapy services, a BCBA® is considered a health care professional. As such, all HIPAA guidelines apply to the provision of therapy.

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**My therapist takes lots of data every day. How will it be kept safe?** All individually identifiable data taken by a therapist or BCBA must be safeguarded. Depending on the type of PHI, this safeguarding can take many forms, such as uploading documents to a secure electronic health record (EHR) or securing any paperwork containing PHI in a locked file cabinet within a locked office. Computer screens displaying PHI must not be visible to those not authorized to view the data. Passwords and/or encryption should be used in documenting PHI in reports or other communications. If records containing PHI are to be transported, they must be within a locked case and should not be left in vehicles for long periods.

**What information is my insurance company allowed to have?** Some information is required for insurers to authorize initiation or continuation of services, or to determine if appropriate documentation is available to support billing of and payment for services rendered. However, your provider should release the minimum amount of information necessary for these purposes. For example, start and stop times of a therapy session, goals of treatment, methods used to reach goals, and progress toward goals may be released to an insurer. Detailed notes about specific conversations are not needed for authorization or payment and are not maintained in the medical record.



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# MEDICAID FAIR HEARING

Contributed by Joanna Lofton, AAoM Community Resource Specialist

A **Medicaid Fair Hearing** is part of the appeals process an individual can utilize when they do not agree with a decision regarding their Medicaid benefits. It is the next step should the local appeal not be ruled in their favor. A Fair Hearing can be requested when there has been a denial or limited authorization of a requested service, a reduction, suspension or termination of previously authorized services or a total denial of Medicaid services.

A **Medicaid Fair Hearing** is presided over by an Administrative Law Judge and must be resolved within 30 calendar days from the receipt of the request. The request for a hearing must be in writing within 90 days after receiving a notice of denial, reduction, suspension or termination of services. A form to request a hearing can be obtained by utilizing the information below.

Hearings can be held remotely, at a variety of locations in your community or in your home. You can also request an in person hearing held at your local DHHS or CMH agency. Online, mailing, and telephone information below:

[www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs)

Michigan Administrative Hearing System (MAHS), Department of Health and Human Services, P.O. Box 30763 Lansing, MI 48909

Call Toll Free (877) 833-0870 TDD- (888) 263-5897



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# RECIPIENT RIGHTS COMPLAINT

Contributed by Joanna Lofton, AAoM Community Resource Specialist

Every individual who receives mental health services regardless of where those services are provided is entitled to be treated with respect and dignity. There are federal laws to protect an individual's rights.

Every individual is entitled to confidentiality, access to their records, to have treatment in a clean and safe environment, and Civil Rights protections. The right to appropriate treatment, supports and participation in self-directed decisions continue into the development of a treatment plan (Person Centered Plan).

When an individual receiving mental health services or their representative believes their rights have been violated they have the right to file a Recipient Rights Complaint. Every mental health agency has a specific individual identified to handle complaints. Their name and phone number must be posted in the public areas where an individual receives services. To file a complaint an individual can call or visit the Rights Office or complete the recipient rights complaint form and return it. Copies of the form should be readily available where you receive services and on the Office of Recipient Rights website [www.michigan.gov/recipientrights](http://www.michigan.gov/recipientrights).

Within 5 business days, the individual should receive a letter acknowledging receipt of their complaint, informing whether the complaint will be investigated. Should the complaint be investigated, it should be completed within 90 days. Once the investigation is complete, a copy of the summary will be sent to the individual. Should the individual or their representative not agree with the outcome of the decision there is a Local Appeal Committee Review process. This appeal must be in writing and filed within 45 days of your receipt of the decision. Information on how and where to file an appeal will also be included with your summary report.

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# March At A Glance

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 - Co-teaching: How Does That Work? (Bloomfield Hills)	2 - Kevin Pelphry RAIN Distinguished Speaker (East Lansing)	3 - Adaptive Storytime (Sterling Heights) - Autism 101 (Southfield)
4 - Super Spark: All Access (Detroit)	5 - WRACE 2nd Annual Provider's Fair (Wayne)	6 - Cooking Matters for Adults at Thumb Behavioral Health Services (Caro)	7 - Hands-on-Learning: Minor Home Improvements (Troy)	8 - Race Relations and the Behavioral Health Professional (Portage)	9 - The wearing o' the green (Pinconning)	10 - A March Celebration (Muskegon)
11 - My Turn: A Sensory Friendly Sunday at AANM (Dearborn)	12 - ADOS-2 Introductory Clinical Workshop (Ann Arbor)	13 - Disability Network Oakland & Macomb Lunch & Learn (Troy)	14 - Hurdles of Growing Up with Autism (Grand Haven)	15 - The After I'm Gone Program (Livonia)	16 - Disable the Label (Marquette) - Mark Reimers RAIN Brown Bag (East Lansing)	17 - Camp Zip Winter Cooking (Ann Arbor)
18 - Abrams Planetarium Sensory friendly show (East Lansing)	19 - Nurturing Families Fast Track (Grand Rapids)	20 - Aim High Hosts Open House (Farmington Hills)	21 - Transition from Dreams to Reality (Frankenmuth)	22 - AAoM Professional Development: Facilitation Skills for Productive Meetings (Detroit)	23 - March Madness (Pinconning) - Language Acquisition through Motor Planning (Adrian)	24 - Family Expo 2018 (Romulus) - OUCARES Family Fun Day (Rochester)
25 - Sensory-Friendly Performance: Clementine (East Lansing)	26 - Michigan IDEA Law (Port Huron)	27 - ACTION Art Education Day (Grand Rapids) - Special Needs Easter Egg Hunt and Bonnet Contest (Free Soil)	28 - The Arc Community Advocates Inclusion Conference (Kalamazoo) - Basics of Social Security & Medicaid/Medicare (Grand Rapids)	29 - Youth Mental Health First Aid (Lansing)	30 - Open Studio at The Art Experience (Pontiac)	31 - Easter with the Equest Bunny (Rockford)

\*\*\* For more information on any of these events please contact MiNavigator line at 877-463-AAOM or navigator@aaomi.org

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## LAST CALL!

2018 Navigating Autism Today  
FREE Parent Conference

Parents, please join us March 8th for a special evening of networking with other parents and expert presenters.

[www.AAoMconference.org](http://www.AAoMconference.org)

March 9th, 2018 - Wayne County  
Community College - Belleville Campus

