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Medicaid Autism Services: Update and Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation

**Health and Human Services Commission Rider 28
Article II, SB 1, 87th Legislative Session**

Basic Overview

- Medicaid autism services policy is live as of Feb. 1, 2022
- Medical policy includes coverage of medically necessary Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services and provides for coordination of service array
- Incorporates ABA into existing state plan service package for children & youth (birth through 20 years) who have a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Delivers services in:
 - Home
 - Community
 - Clinic Settings



Basic Overview (cont.)

- Utilizes an interdisciplinary model of care and includes participation with the individual, legal guardian, and/or caregiver, as appropriate
- Service array includes, but is not limited to, the following, if medically necessary. These services may occur concurrently with ABA.
 - Physical Therapy
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Speech Therapy
 - Outpatient Behavioral Health Services
 - Physician Medication Management



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Ongoing Activities

- Continue close tracking of provider enrollment and MCO contracting and credentialing
- Continue stakeholder engagement, including advisory committee presentations and family flyer development
- Continue outreach efforts to potential providers
- Will develop and propose Texas Administrative Code rules





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Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation

**Autism Services Section, Children's Services Handbook,
Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual (TMPPM)**

General Background Information

For Medicaid service authorization and reimbursement, the prescribing physician*, as required, must **provide evidence of the medical necessity** for Medicaid services.



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ASD Diagnosis Requirements for ABA Services

- Prior to determining a child or youth's eligibility for Medicaid ABA services, **appropriate analysis and documentation of all elements of the ASD diagnosis** must be on file.
- The primary or specialty care physician, the Texas Medicaid and Healthcare Partnership or the Medicaid managed care organization must **ensure that there is a complete Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation** which supports a determination of medical necessity for ABA services.
- Clinical research and the policy of the American Academy of Pediatrics **support the use of a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation** for the diagnosis of ASD.



Overview of Evaluation

A comprehensive diagnostic evaluation:

- Provides current data **to facilitate provision of** clinically appropriate and effective, evidence-based, medically necessary **ABA services**
- Considers the behaviors associated with **the core symptoms of ASD and the symptom severity level** per the current edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM); and
- has **three basic elements.**



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Three Basic Elements

In the Texas Medicaid Provider Procedures Manual, use of **each of the following** is required to complete the comprehensive diagnostic evaluation:

1. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM);
2. Another validated ASD diagnostic assessment tool or combination of tools; **and**
3. Documentation of the analysis and diagnosis, as required.



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American Psychiatric Association and DSM-V

[APA Description of Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a complex developmental condition involving persistent challenges with social communication, restricted interests, and repetitive behavior.

While autism is considered a lifelong disorder, the degree of impairment in functioning because of these challenges varies between individuals with autism.



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American Psychiatric Association and DSM-V (cont.)

- Early signs of this disorder can be noticed by parents/caregivers or pediatricians before a child reaches one year of age.
- However, symptoms typically become more consistently visible by the time a child is 2 or 3 years old.
- In some cases, the functional impairment related to autism may be mild and not apparent until the child starts school, after which their deficits may be pronounced when amongst their peers.



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DSM & Validated Diagnostic Tool or Tools

An ASD diagnosis for eligibility must:

- be based on specific diagnostic criteria and the symptom severity level determination using the DSM, **and**
- include use of the most current version of another validated ASD diagnostic assessment tool or tools, by a qualified provider(s), as age and clinically appropriate which indicate(s) a diagnosis of ASD.



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Validated ASD Diagnostic Assessment Tool(s)

Examples of validated ASD diagnostic tools may include the current version of the following:

- The Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS),
- The Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R),
- The Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS), **or**
- Another validated diagnostic tool, as age and clinically appropriate.

An ASD screening tool **may not** be used to diagnose ASD.



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Documentation

Two types of diagnosing providers

ASD symptom analysis, diagnosis and documentation, which are based on the results from the DSM **and** one or more other validated ASD diagnostic assessment tool(s), must be provided by one of two types of diagnosing providers: a specialist provider **or** an interdisciplinary diagnostic team.

A specialist provider includes:

- A developmental pediatrician;
- A neurologist;
- A psychiatrist; or
- A licensed psychologist



Documentation (cont.)

An interdisciplinary diagnostic team includes:

- A primary care or other physician who consults, makes the ASD diagnosis, and obtains appropriate documentation of all elements of the comprehensive diagnostic evaluation.
- For the team model, the physician **must consult with:**
 - one of the specialist providers from the previous slide, **or**
 - one or more **qualified and licensed child specialists with expertise in autism** from certain provider types



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Documentation (cont.)

The **authorized provider types** from which one or more qualified child specialists with expertise in autism may be, include:

- Licensed clinical social worker;
- Licensed professional counselor;
- Licensed psychological associate;
- Licensed specialist in school psychology;
- Occupational therapist; and
- Speech-language pathologist



Comprehensive Diagnostic Evaluation Frequency

Eligibility for ABA services requires a diagnosis of ASD, based on a comprehensive diagnostic evaluation, **within 3 years** of initiation or recertification of ABA services

3-year frequency requirement:

- The purpose is to re-assess symptom severity to guide ABA service evaluation and delivery and take **a holistic approach** to assessing other needs of the child/youth



Coordination to Obtain All Elements

- The child or youth may have **a medical home**, which is recommended, where the primary care physician, who is knowledgeable about the whole health of the child or youth, coordinates resources, referrals and services.
- **MCOs** have **service coordinators** who are expected to facilitate obtaining all elements of the comprehensive diagnostic evaluation and their documentation.



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Thank You

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