



The Department of Human Services (DHS) is implementing a number of measures related to services for children and adolescents with behavioral health needs. A summary of key elements of DHS' action plan and timeline for implementation is below.

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### **Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS)**

- BHRS encompasses a broad range of highly flexible, individualized, home- and community-based services for children and adolescents (under age 21) with behavioral health needs.
- In response to feedback from families, providers, and other stakeholders, DHS is concentrating efforts on the development of appropriate regulatory guidance for BHRS with the goal of improving the quality of BHRS for children and adolescents who need these services.
- The new regulations will address, in addition to other topics, the minimum qualifications, including training and experience, as well as supervision requirements for practitioners who provide BHRS.
- DHS is engaging with stakeholders to develop regulations. DHS has established a workgroup that will review existing policies, bulletins, and data that will be used to draft the regulations that will govern BHRS, including services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). DHS anticipates releasing proposed regulations by November 2016.

### **Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)**

- ABA is one of the treatment approaches available for treating children and adolescents impacted by ASD.
- DHS has developed a two-year action plan to enhance accessibility and quality of ABA in Pennsylvania. The action plan includes but is not limited to:
  - Continuing to develop new requirements for the training, qualifications, skills, and experience of practitioners who provide ABA.

DHS has already taken the following steps:

- Required HealthChoices contractors to provide to families upon request the qualifications, training, and experience of individuals that provide Behavioral Specialist Consultants-Autism Spectrum Disorder (BSC-ASD) or Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS) workers who deliver ABA to their children;
- Issued a bulletin clarifying the training requirements for TSS workers who implement a treatment plan that includes ABA interventions. The bulletin can be found here: [http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/bulletin\\_admin/c\\_223291.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/bulletin_admin/c_223291.pdf);
- Developed a confirmation form, effective April 10, 2016, for individuals who provide BSC-ASD services or who otherwise oversee the implementation of treatment plans that include ABA. By completing the confirmation form, these individuals confirm that they have skills and knowledge related to ABA;

- Developed an attestation form for BHRS providers that use BSC-ASD and TSS services to provide ABA to children or adolescents with ASD. By completing the attestation form, BHRS providers attest that they use individuals to provide services who have skills and knowledge related to the provision of ABA. ABA Providers that complete the attestation are listed in the Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations' (BH-MCOs) online provider directory as BHRS providers that provide ABA.
  - Issued a bulletin notifying providers of the training requirements for newly licensed behavior specialists who use BSC-ASD services to provide ABA and who meet the training requirements for the Behavior Specialist Licensure through trainings approved by the Bureau of Autism Services or the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. The bulletin can be found here: [http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/bulletin\\_admin/c\\_226813.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/bulletin_admin/c_226813.pdf);
  - Issued a bulletin applying to entities that are not licensed to provide outpatient, partial hospitalization, or family based mental health services and who seek to enroll in the Medical Assistance program to use BSC-ASD services and TSS services to provide ABA to children with ASD. The bulletin can be found here: [http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/bulletin\\_admin/c\\_229221.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/bulletin_admin/c_229221.pdf).
- Assessing (and improving upon, if necessary) the capacity of existing managed care networks to provide ABA.
    - DHS requested that BH-MCOs track requests from families for ABA, which will be used to assist DHS with assessing network capacity. BH-MCOs began submitting reports to DHS on June 15, 2016.
    - DHS requested that BH-MCOs identify providers who have the capacity to serve additional children and adolescents with ASD using individuals that have skills and knowledge related to the provision of ABA. BH-MCOs began submitting reports to DHS on June 30, 2016.
  - Issued a bulletin that provides information on the guidelines to assess the medical necessity of ABA. DHS issued this bulletin on July 1, 2016, effective July 2, 2016. The bulletin can be found here: [http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/bulletin\\_admin/c\\_232190.pdf](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/bulletin_admin/c_232190.pdf)
  - Issuing a bulletin that will provide information on ABA using BSC-ASD and TSS services for children and adolescents diagnosed with ASD. DHS will be seeking stakeholder input and will issue it in July in final form after reviewing this input.

### **Behavior Specialist Licensure**

- DHS will again send out guidance to accredited colleges and universities that are interested in developing graduate-level coursework or programs. The guidance is intended to provide information to the colleges and universities on how they can design their coursework or programs so that students graduate with all of the requirements needed to qualify for a Behavior Specialist license. This will include guidance for how students can satisfy the coursework and experience requirements while working towards their degree. DHS will begin distributing guidance in August 2016.