



# Autism Applied Behavior Analysis Benefits

Watching a young child grow can be a fun and exciting experience. However, concerns about developmental delays can sometimes lead parents to worry about autism-spectrum disorders. When autism-related disorders are suspected, early diagnosis and intervention can have a positive impact on the child and the family. To help, PG&E offers an Autism and Related Disorders benefit program.

## Applied behavior analysis (ABA) services are available to help treat those diagnosed with autism or pervasive development disorder (PDD)

PG&E, in partnership with Beacon Health Options (formerly ValueOptions), covers applied behavior analysis (ABA) for all PG&E employees, eligible dependents and retirees throughout the service territory who are enrolled in the company's medical plans. Regardless of employees' current insurance carrier or plan, these services are provided through Beacon Health Options. Benefit coverage of these services requires authorization or pre-certification with Beacon Health Options prior to services being delivered, and then on a recurring basis as required by Beacon Health Options.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and autism are both general terms for a group of complex disorders of brain development characterized, in varying degrees, by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors.

Autism statistics from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate around one in 68 American children falls on the autism spectrum. Scientific studies have also demonstrated that techniques and methodologies derived from ABA improve learning, communication and social skills in young children with autism. While the outcomes of early intervention vary, most individuals with these disorders benefit from treatment.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What diagnoses are covered?

Covered diagnoses include autism, which is a general term used to describe a group of complex developmental brain disorders known as Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD). The other covered pervasive developmental disorders are PDD-NOS (Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified), Asperger Syndrome, Rett Syndrome and Childhood Disintegrative Disorder. All of these diagnoses, along with a diagnosis of being "at risk" of autism or PDD, will be covered.

### 2. What services are available to treat covered dependents who are "at risk" or have been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

PG&E, in partnership with Beacon Health Options, covers applied behavior analysis (ABA) for all PG&E employees, eligible dependents and retirees. Benefit coverage of ABA services require prior authorization or pre-certification.

### 3. Are there age limits, dollar limits or day limits that apply to the ABA benefits?

No. There are no age-specific, day or dollar limits that apply to the ABA benefit. ABA services still require prior authorization or pre-certification and must meet medical necessity. Based on an initial review and concurrent review of the case, a case-specific quantity of ABA therapy services will be allocated.

### 4. Will I need to pay for part of the cost of the ABA Benefits?

There is no deductible for the ABA Benefit. The plan will pay 100% of the cost for all authorized and pre-certified ABA therapy benefits with no member copay or coinsurance.

Coverage for ABA services requires prior authorization or pre-certification prior to use. Based on an initial review and concurrent review of the case, a case-specific quantity of ABA Therapy services will be allocated.



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## 5. What are the licensing and certification requirements for a supervisor or provider of Plan-covered ABA services?

Below you will find the hierarchy of Qualified Autism Service (QAS) Teams:

### **Qualified Autism Service (QAS) Provider:**

- Board Certified Behavior Analyst® (BCBA-D®)
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst® (BCBA®)
- Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)
- Licensed Mental Healthcare Provider (LMHP) with specialization

**Duties: Designs, Supervises, or Provides Treatment**

### **Qualified Autism Service (QAS) Professional:**

- Board Certified Behavior Analyst® (BCBA®)
- Board Certified assistant Behavior Analyst® (BCaBA®)

**Duties: Provides Treatment, Assessment, Supervision**

### **Qualified Autism Service (QAS) Paraprofessional (HS Diploma, BA)**

**Duties: Direct Intervention**

## 6. What happens when I call Beacon Health Options and inform them that I have a covered dependent who is either “at risk” or has autism or PDD?

To obtain prior authorization or pre-certification from Beacon Health Options, please call 1-800-562-3588. During this call a care manager will request basic information including, but not limited to, the diagnosis, who made the diagnosis and what the presenting symptoms are (i.e., developmentally-delayed skills or problem behaviors). Following this intake, you will receive a list of providers, who will then conduct an assessment to determine treatment needs.

The Beacon Health Options care manager will assist you with any questions. The Beacon Health Options representative will advise you that ABA therapy will be covered according to the Plan's benefits when provided or supervised by a Beacon Health Options' ABA licensed or certified provider of services. Prior authorization or pre-certification is required in order for benefits to be paid.

## 7. What if I have a covered dependent who is “at risk” or has autism or PDD that is already receiving ABA services?

Ask your current ABA provider to contact Beacon Health Options at 1-800-562-3588. The representative will help your provider coordinate a discussion with Beacon Health Options' Provider Relations Department. For more information or to ask questions concerning the ABA benefit, please call Beacon Health Options at 1-800-562-3588.

## 8. Do PG&E health plans cover speech therapy, occupational therapy or physical therapy for individuals diagnosed with autism or autism spectrum disorders?

Yes, if medically necessary, all of PG&E's health plans will cover speech therapy, occupational therapy, or physical therapy for individuals diagnosed with autism or autism spectrum disorder.

## 9. What additional services does EAP offer?

Call the EAP hotline at 1-888-445-4436 to find out about additional EAP resources for you and your children including counseling, legal and financial referrals, and Work/Life referrals to national support organizations, parent support groups, additional information on schools and resources for autism, camps and child care agencies in your area and more.