



ABA PROVIDER ALERT

UPDATE: ABA PROGRAM RESPONSE TO COVID-19

April 13, 2020

Please review the following updates from the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) in response to COVID-19.

Additional Units for ABA Treatment Planning

MDH recognizes there may be an increased need to complete ABA treatment planning activities as a result of the unexpected impact COVID-19 has had on the provision of ABA services.

Optum will add a **total of 16 additional units** of ABA Treatment Planning (H2012) to all current open authorizations for ABA treatment. Additionally, Optum will authorize up to 112 units of ABA treatment planning (H2012) across any initial/concurrent treatment request submitted for review moving forward. This will remain available through the current state of emergency.

Requirement Waived for Registered Behavior Technicians (RBT)

On March 18, 2020, an announcement was shared from the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) that Pearson Testing centers are closed until further notice. MDH recognizes the impacts this has on the ability of prospective RBTs to take the necessary exam to obtain the RBT credential.

MDH is waiving the registration requirement for RBTs enrolling with Maryland Medicaid during the state of emergency. Prospective RBTs are still expected to submit an RBT application via ePREP. This step is required to ensure the individual is linked with your provider organization in Optum's system. However, the application will **not require registration from the BACB** to be submitted with the application.

Therefore, until the end of the state of emergency, a behavior technician delivering ABA services (whether in-person or via telehealth) may be reimbursed without having obtained an RBT credential from the BACB. Once the state of emergency has ended

and Pearson Testing centers are re-opened, the behavior technician will still be required to obtain the RBT credential.

For more information see [COVID-19 Transmittal #12 - April 6, 2020](#).

Parent Training (97156/97156-U2) Reimbursable as “Audio-Only”

MDH is allowing some services to be reimbursed if rendered via audio-only (telephone calls) [COVID-19 Transmittal #4a - March 21, 2020](#). The ABA program would like to provide further clarity on the availability of this service.

If a parent/caregiver of a Medicaid participant cannot access technology allowing for a video connection, audio only telephone calls will be permitted.

As of 3/12/2020, parent training (97156/97156-UB) rendered by a BCBA, BCBA-D or licensed psychologist via audio only telephone call is a reimbursable service.

To bill for audio-only telephonic services, providers must bill for 97156 and use the “-UB” modifier to identify the claim as a telephonically delivered service. Services delivered via telehealth using two-way audio-visual technology assisted communication should be billed using the “-GT” modifier.

Please reference the chart below which describes what is available to bill and any additional requirements for the service:

CPT Code	Modifier to Bill for Two-Way HIPAA Compliant Audio-Visual connection	Modifier to Bill for Audio-Only Telephonic Connection	Prior Authorization Required
97151	GT		Yes*
97152	GT		Yes*
97153	GT		Yes*
97154	GT		Yes*
97155	GT		No
97156/97156-U2	GT	UB	No
97157	GT		Yes*
97158	GT		Yes*
H2012	GT		Yes*
0362T	GT		Yes*
0373T	GT		Yes*

*Please reference [Optum Maryland - ABA Provider Alert: Telehealth Services in Response to COVID-19 - March 17, 2020](#) which describes addendum requirements.

For additional questions, please feel free to reach us at: MarylandProviderRelations@Optum.com.

