

Behavioral Health Treatment (BHT) Coverage for Members Under the Age of 21

What is EPSDT?

In 1967, Congress expanded the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit for children. The EPSDT benefit provides comprehensive screening to diagnose and provide treatment and preventative health care services for individuals under the age of 21 who are enrolled in Medi-Cal. EPSDT is designed to assure that children receive early screenings and care, so that health problems are averted or diagnosed and treated as early as possible. Among the services included under the EPSDT benefits are physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy as well as vision, dental, and hearing services, and Behavioral Health Treatment (BHT).

What is ABA/BHT?

Behavioral Health Treatment (BHT), better known as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and related treatments, is a time-intensive and labor-intensive behavioral intervention originally designed to treat the symptoms of autism in children. BHT services teach skills through the use of behavioral observation and reinforcement, or through prompting to teach each step of targeted behavior. This treatment is typically conducted in children's homes for hours a day and in other community settings. Parent/guardian participation is required to ensure that the behavioral interventions are taught and maintained over time.

As of July 2018, a diagnosis of autism or autism spectrum disorder is no longer required for children 0-21 years old to qualify for BHT services. A formal recommendation or prescription for ABA from a licensed psychologist or physician is a requirement.

Do you have patients 0-21 years old who might benefit from an evaluation for BHT?

You or your office can initiate the referral process by:

- Calling 888-347-2264 or emailing ASDBenefit@lacare.org
- Asking the patient, parent, or caregiver to contact L.A. Care BHT team directly

Do you have patients in need of occupational, physical or speech therapy?

Based on the result of your EPSDT assessment (once found medically necessary), you can make your referral to the provider group/IPA. Physicians in the Direct Network should contact L.A. Care Utilization Management.

Do you have patients who might benefit from vision, dental, or hearing services?

Vision, dental and hearing services must be provided at intervals, which meet reasonable standards of medical and dental practice, and at other intervals indicated as medically necessary to determine the existence of a suspected illness or condition. These services must include, at a minimum, diagnosis and treatment for defects in vision and/or hearing, including eyeglasses and/or hearing aids as well as relief of dental pain and infections, restoration of teeth, and maintenance of dental health.

Based on the result of your EPSDT assessment (once found medically necessary), you can make your referral to the provider group/IPA. Physicians in the Direct Network should contact L.A. Care Utilization Management.