

Parent Toolkit



New to the Autism Care Demonstration



Welcome to the TRICARE Autism Care Demonstration

If your child has been newly diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), you may find yourself wondering where to turn next. Arming yourself with information is critical. The more you learn about and understand ASD, the better equipped you will be to make informed decisions on behalf of your child and your family.

Early, consistent and tailored treatment interventions can help children acquire new skills and overcome a wide variety of developmental challenges, supporting them as they learn, grow and thrive. The Defense Health Agency's Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) has been carefully developed to ensure that you and your family have access to applied behavior analysis (ABA) services administered through a network of highly qualified applied behavioral health service providers and experienced, knowledgeable staff, all dedicated to helping your family successfully navigate the complex nature of autism.

In addition, we have created a web portal dedicated to ACD families where you will find information and materials online designed to help answer your questions and direct you to the multiple resources available. Access the portal at www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD. Materials, like this parent toolkit, have been put together to help you navigate the wealth of support services available to you and the steps involved in accessing the critical care that may benefit you and your family.

Welcome, and thank you for allowing the team at Health Net Federal Services, LLC to partner with you throughout this very important and personal journey.

Respectfully,

Betsy McBride, PhD
Licensed Psychologist
ACD Program Manager



We're dedicated to helping your family successfully navigate the complex nature of autism.



Table of Contents

Welcome to the TRICARE Autism Care Demonstration.....	2
Introduction.....	5
Your TRICARE West Region Contractor – Health Net Federal Services	5
How to contact us.....	6
Services Available to Beneficiaries with Autism Spectrum Disorder.....	7
TRICARE Basic Benefit.....	7
Supplemental Programs.....	7
Extended Care Health Option	7
Other Services	7
Autism Care Demonstration.....	7
Benefits under the Autism Care Demonstration	8
Applied Behavior Analysis.....	8
What to Expect in an ABA Program	8
Autism Services Navigator.....	8
ABA Provider Types	9
ABA Supervisors (BCBA, BCBA-D, LBA or Clinical Psychologist)	9
Behavior Technicians (RBT, ABAT, BCAT, State Certified).....	9
Sole and Tiered Models.....	9
ABA Provider Audits.....	9
Autism Care Demonstration Participation	10
Diagnosis.....	10
Pre-Enrollment.....	10
Eligible Plan Types.....	10
Definitive Diagnosis	11
What’s required for a definitive autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis?	11
Autism Care Demonstration Enrollment	11
Receiving Care under the Autism Care Demonstration.....	12
Step 1: Getting Referred for ABA Services.....	12
Who can issue referrals?	12
How long does it take for HNFS to process the referral?.....	12
For how long are referrals for ABA services valid and what do they include?	12
How does HNFS assign my child an ABA provider?	12
Step 2: Completing the Initial Assessment	13
Assessment Approval Letters.....	13
What happens during an assessment?	13
Second Opinions – Assessments.....	13
Outcome Measures	14

Step 3: Getting Authorized for ABA Services	15
Clinical Necessity Reviews – What are they?	15
Clinical Necessity Reviews – What is the process?	15
ABA Service Settings	16
Step 4: Receiving ABA Services	18
Access to Care Standards – Treatment.....	18
Parent/Guardian Training.....	18
Changing ABA Providers (Second Opinions) – Treatment	18
Step 5: Subsequent Authorizations	19
Outcome Measure Frequency	19
Referral Cycle Check	19
Discharge Planning	19
Second Opinions on Discharge	19
Care Coordination and ABA: The Role of the Autism Services Navigator	20
Who is eligible for an ASN?	20
What is an ASN?	20
What are the responsibilities of an ASN?	20
How long does it take for HNFS to assign my child an ASN?	20
What if my child entered into the ACD before Oct. 1, 2021?	20
What is a Comprehensive Care Plan?	21
Developing/Updating the CCP	21
Additional Autism Care Demonstration Resources	22
Additional External Resources	23
Contacting HNFS	23
Thank You	23
Common Terms and Acronyms.....	24





Introduction

TRICARE's Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) offers beneficiaries diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families a comprehensive network of support. Applied behavior analysis (ABA) services are tailored to your child's individual needs, and parent training is in place to help you develop effective techniques to build your own capabilities in helping your child. This is all administered through a network of highly qualified medical, behavioral and support staff carefully vetted to guide this important journey.

The ACD Parent Toolkit is designed to help you understand the building blocks of the ACD and the many components working together to support your child. This toolkit describes each step of the program—from eligibility and initial assessments to re-authorizations and eventually, discharge and transition. You'll learn what to expect every six months, one year and two years while receiving services. And, how to access the many other services in place to support your family such as [Military OneSource](#), the [Medicaid Waiver program](#) and other resources local to your community, state and region.

The parent toolkit is available to help parents navigate their family's ACD journey. Whether an existing family or brand new to the program, the parent toolkit will guide you every step of the way.

This toolkit, along with a resource library of support services is available from our website: www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD.

Your TRICARE West Region Contractor – Health Net Federal Services

TRICARE is available worldwide and managed regionally. There are two TRICARE regions in the United States—TRICARE East and TRICARE West.

As the contractor in the West Region, Health Net Federal Services, LLC (HNFS) administers the TRICARE program in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa (except the Rock Island Arsenal area), Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, (except the St. Louis area), Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas (areas of western Texas only), Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

If you live in a state not listed here, you are considered part of the TRICARE East Region, which is administered by Humana Military. Learn more at www.humana-military.com.



How to contact us

HNFS offers a dedicated team to help you with your Autism Care Demonstration questions. You can also direct your providers, local military hospital or clinic, and organizations (such as the Exceptional Family Medical Program) to these resources.

ACD Customer Service Line	1-844-866-WEST (9378), option 5 Monday through Friday 5:00 a.m.–9:00 p.m. (Pacific time) <i>Note: Provider locator services available 24/7 through 1-844-866-WEST (9378).</i>	Dedicated ACD team available to assist you with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• eligibility• benefits• finding a provider• authorizations and referrals• claims• moving• access to care... and more!
Email	CS_ABA@healthnet.com	Email your ACD-specific questions to our dedicated ACD team.
Online	www.tricare-west.com/go/acd	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACD-specific content• access to the West Region provider directory• access to local resources• secure Ask Us email for claims inquiries



Services Available to Beneficiaries with Autism Spectrum Disorder



TRICARE beneficiaries diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have multiple health care and support options:

TRICARE Basic Benefit

Many services for managing and treating ASD are covered under the TRICARE basic benefit. These include, but are not limited to:

- Diagnosis of ASD
- Medical team conferences
- Occupational, physical and speech therapy
- Prescription medication
- Psychotherapy and counseling
- Parent-mediated programs

For more information about TRICARE covered services, visit <https://www.tricare.mil/CoveredServices.aspx>.

Supplemental Programs

Extended Care Health Option

The Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) is a supplemental benefit program that provides services and supplies beyond the basic TRICARE military health care program. To learn more, visit www.tricare.mil/ECHO.

- ECHO is available to active duty family members who meet the qualifications of a specific physical, developmental and/or mental disability.
- The program provides beneficiaries with coordinated ECHO services and supplies to reduce the disabling effects of the qualifying condition or disorder.

Take note! If your child is the dependent of an active duty service member, he or she **must be registered** for ECHO to participate in the Autism Care Demonstration. ECHO registration deadlines apply.

ECHO benefits commonly used by beneficiaries diagnosed with ASD

- respite care – up to 16 hours of care a month
- incontinence supplies or diapers
- durable equipment (for example, assistive technology applications)
- training (for example, how to use assistive technology devices)
- assistive services, such as those from a qualified interpreter or translator

Find complete details at www.tricare.mil/ECHO and www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD.

Qualifying for ECHO

To qualify for ECHO, beneficiaries must:

1. Be enrolled in the **Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)** through the sponsor's branch of service. In some cases, this may be waived, such as when the custodial parent is not the active duty sponsor.

2. Be diagnosed with an ECHO qualifying condition, such as ASD, to meet eligibility for registration into ECHO. Find the full list of qualifying conditions at www.tricare.mil/ECHO.

How to Register for ECHO

HNFS reviews and processes ECHO registration requests for the TRICARE West Region.

To register, you must submit the following:

1. Proof of an ECHO-qualifying diagnosis.
Note: If HNFS has proof of an ASD or other ECHO-qualifying diagnosis already on file, you don't have to resubmit documentation.
2. Proof of the active duty family member's enrollment into the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). Learn about EFMP at <https://efmpandme.militaryonesource.mil>.

Acceptable documents to show proof of EFMP enrollment:

- A letter from the EFMP office verifying enrollment
- A printout summary of the EFMP registration located at an EFMP office
- A copy of the DD2792 packet (signed by the EFMP coordinator)

Other Services

Other services available to support a beneficiary with ASD include:

- Sources within the Department of Defense, such as **Military OneSource** and the **Exceptional Family Medical Program**
- Government programs such as the **Medicaid Waiver program**
- Academic/educational services such as an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) provided by the school district.

Not all services may be appropriate for all people, families or situations.

Autism Care Demonstration

TRICARE's Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) allows for clinically necessary and appropriate applied behavior analysis (ABA) services to be rendered to TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The demonstration, which began in July of 2014, is currently scheduled to continue through Dec. 31, 2023. The overarching goal of the ACD is to "analyze, evaluate, and compare the quality, efficiency, convenience, and cost effectiveness of ABA services that do not constitute proven medical care provided under the medical benefit coverage requirements that govern the TRICARE Program." (TRICARE Operations Manual, Chapter 18)

ABA providers are authorized to render only ABA services for the core symptoms of ASD under the ACD.

Benefits under the Autism Care Demonstration



Applied Behavior Analysis

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is a type of service that focuses on specific behaviors that affect individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The overall goal of ABA is to decrease challenging/interfering behavior and teach appropriate replacement behavior to improve the quality of life of the beneficiary and their family and caregivers, ultimately reducing or eliminating direct services.

Strategies include, but are not limited to:

- shaping behavior patterns through reinforcement and consequences
- differential schedules of reinforcement
- discrete trial teaching
- natural environmental training
- pivotal response training

Take note! Which ABA services are authorized and rendered under the Autism Care Demonstration depend on the patient's individual needs as determined by assessments and treatment progress.

ABA is delivered optimally when family members/caregivers actively participate by consistently reinforcing the ABA interventions in the home setting in accordance with developed treatment plan.

What to Expect in an ABA Program

ABA Services

- initial assessments and reassessments
- development of a treatment plan
- one-on-one ABA services
- training of immediate family members on ABA
- modifications based on the progress of treatment plan goals, outcome measures and parent engagement

Age limitations

There is no minimum or maximum age limit or duration limit. All services are authorized based on clinical necessity.

Autism Services Navigator

On Oct. 1, 2021, TRICARE introduced the Autism Services Navigator (ASN) role to the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD). Contractors, such as HNFS, are responsible for assigning ASNs to beneficiaries.

To be eligible for an ASN, your child must be new to the ACD as of Oct. 1, 2021. You are considered "new" if you:

- Entered the ACD on or after Oct. 1, 2021
- Paused or discontinued services for more than 365 days if in the ACD before Oct. 1, 2021

If you were assigned an ASN and move, you remain eligible for an ASN as long as you continue to meet eligibility requirements.

Take note! Any beneficiary who is assigned an ASN but declines the services will no longer be eligible for the ACD.

Learn more in the [Autism Services Navigator](#) section of this toolkit.



ABA Provider Types



Throughout the course of your child's ABA treatment, he or she may receive services from one or more of the following ABA provider types.

ABA Supervisors (BCBA, BCBA-D, LBA or Clinical Psychologist)

TRICARE-authorized ABA supervisors must have:

- A master's degree or above in a qualifying field
- A state license or certification in behavior analysis or psychology for full clinical practice, or certification from the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB).

ABA supervisors in the TRICARE West Region must be credentialed and approved by HNFS to ensure all provider requirements are met before they can render services.

Take note! ABA supervisors are listed in the TRICARE West Region Network Provider Directory as: *"Behavioral Analyst – Master's Level or PhD, ABA"*

Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBA or QASP)

Assistant behavior analysts must have:

- A bachelor's degree or above in a qualifying field
- A state license or certification, or certification from the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) or Qualified Applied Behavior Analysis (QABA) certification board.

Assistant behavior analysts work under the supervision of an authorized ABA supervisor.

Assistant behavior analysts must be credentialed and approved by HNFS to ensure all provider requirements are met before they can render services.

Take note! Assistant behavior analysts **are not listed separately** in the TRICARE West Region Network Provider Directory.

Behavior Technicians (RBT, ABAT, BCAT, State Certified)

Behavior technicians (BTs) must have a current certification from:

- Behavior Analyst Certification Board® (RBTs),
- Qualified Applied Behavior Analysis® (ABATs),
- Behavioral Intervention Certification® Council (BCATs), or
- State certification (where applicable).

BTs are not credentialed, but they must be certified and approved by HNFS to ensure all provider requirements are met in order to render services for TRICARE beneficiaries.

Take note! BTs **are not listed separately** in the TRICARE West Region Network Provider Directory.

Sole and Tiered Models

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) services will be delivered under a sole or tiered model. The model chosen depends on the individual needs of the beneficiary, the clinical need of the duration and intensity of direct therapy, and provider availability.

- In a **sole provider model**, your child gets all ABA services from authorized ABA supervisors with a master's degree or higher.
- In a **tiered model**, your child gets ABA services from a team of providers led by an authorized ABA supervisor. The support team can include:
 - Assistant behavior analysts
 - Behavior technicians

Under the tiered model, the support team may render care, **but the ABA supervisor is always responsible for the oversight and direction of care.**

ABA Provider Audits

In addition to making sure ABA providers meet TRICARE and HNFS credentialing and certification requirements, we also review provider billing practices to make sure the services your ABA providers bill TRICARE for are:

- TRICARE-approved services under the Autism Care Demonstration.
- Supported by clear and complete session notes (medical documentation).
- Consistent with the treatment approved for your child.

Providers who fail to demonstrate they are complying with state and federal regulations, TRICARE requirements, and provider participation agreements, policies and guidelines are subject to penalties and/or more severe administrative actions as required by law and contract.



Autism Care Demonstration Participation



As a reminder ...

- TRICARE beneficiaries must meet specific qualifications in order to participate in the ACD. Learn more at www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD.
- If your child is the dependent of an active duty service member, he or she must register for the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) to participate in the ACD. ECHO registration deadlines apply. Learn more at www.tricare.mil/ECHO.
- Beneficiaries who are eligible for but decline an Autism Services Navigator are no longer eligible for the ACD.

Diagnosis

Diagnosis occurs under the TRICARE basic benefit. TRICARE defines which provider types can diagnose beneficiaries with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and refer them for the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD).

- **Primary care managers:** pediatricians, pediatric family medicine physicians, pediatric nurse practitioners
- **Specialized ASD-diagnosing providers:** physicians board-certified or board-eligible in developmental-behavioral or neurodevelopmental pediatrics, pediatric neurology or child psychiatry, PhD clinical psychologists, and, specific board-certified doctors of nursing practice (DNPs)

Pre-Enrollment

TRICARE’s Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) offers important care options for beneficiaries diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families.

Before getting care under the ACD:

- TRICARE beneficiaries first need a definitive ASD diagnosis.
- A TRICARE-authorized ASD-diagnosing and referring provider must submit a referral or diagnostic evaluation to HNFS. This step is also referred to as a nomination for ACD services.

This initiates the process for ACD enrollment.

Once we have started the pre-enrollment process, our Autism Services Coordinators (non-clinical coordinators with experience with the ACD) will support you in completing all the enrollment criteria.

Take note! An Autism Services Coordinator is different than the Autism Services Navigator described previously. ASNs are not assigned until we have verified ACD enrollment criteria (for those eligible for ASN services).



Eligible Plan Types

The Autism Care Demonstration is available to qualifying individuals regardless of TRICARE Plan type.

Active Duty Service Members and Families *	Retired Service Members and Families	Reserve Members and Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TRICARE Prime• TRICARE Prime Remote• TRICARE for Life• TRICARE Young Adult• TRICARE Select	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TRICARE Prime• TRICARE for Life• TRICARE Young Adult• TRICARE Select	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TRICARE Reserve Select• TRICARE Retired Reserve

*ECHO enrollment required for dependents of active duty family members.



Definitive Diagnosis

What's required for a definitive autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis?

HNFS must verify the following required elements were submitted by the TRICARE-authorized ASD-diagnosing and referring provider:

- **A referral or diagnostic evaluation stating ASD.** We cannot accept a "provisional" diagnosis. The referral may or may not specify ABA services.
- **The date of initial ASD diagnosis.**
- **A DSM-5 Diagnostic Checklist.** The referring provider must complete this checklist and return it with all initial referrals and at each two-year referral cycle. (It does not have to be completed by the provider who first diagnosed your child.) Referring providers can download the checklist from our Provider Forms page. Note: ABA providers are not permitted to complete the DSM-5 Diagnostic Checklist.
- **Completion and submission of the results of an approved validated assessment tool.**
 - Screening Tool for Autism in Toddlers and Young Children (STAT),
 - Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule-Second Edition (ADOS-2),
 - Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised (ADI-R),
 - Childhood Autism Rating Scale-Second Edition (CARS-2),
 - Gilliam Autism Rating Scale, Third Edition (GARS-3) (For this tool, the ABA provider will also complete a diagnostic evaluation in addition to the GARS-3 parent questionnaire.)

Take note! If your child has not yet completed an ACD-approved assessment tool, the Autism Services Coordinator can help you with how to complete this under the TRICARE basic benefit. We will continue to support your child for up to the 180 days while the assessment tool can be completed.

- **Provisional registration in ECHO (if your child is a dependent of an active duty service member).** The Autism Services Coordinator can assist you with the ECHO registration process. You will receive provisional registration into ECHO for up to 90 days. During the 90 days, your child can access the ECHO benefit and continue the process of initiating ABA services under the ACD.

Active duty family members ... Take note!

- If you do not submit proof of Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) enrollment (or a waiver, when eligible) within the 90 days, your child will be disenrolled from ECHO and will no longer be eligible for ABA services.
- If your child loses eligibility for ABA services between the expiration of the 90-day provisional period and registration into ECHO, the Autism Services Coordinator will support you for an additional 90 days. If after 180 days, ECHO registration has not been completed, your child will no longer be eligible for the ACD.

Autism Care Demonstration Enrollment

Once we have verified all diagnosis criteria has been met, your child will officially be enrolled into the Autism Care Demonstration!

Take note! If you are not able to complete all the criteria within the 180 days of support from the Autism Services Coordinator, you can start the process again once all criteria is met.



Receiving Care under the Autism Care Demonstration



Understanding the steps required – from referral to reauthorizations to discharge – will help you, your child and your child's providers stay on track.

Take note! If your child was enrolled into the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) on or after Oct. 1, 2021, you will be assigned an Autism Services Navigator.

Step 1: Getting Referred for ABA Services

If we have already received a referral for applied behavior analysis (ABA) services during the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) pre-enrollment process, we will verify it meets all requirements. If we don't have a referral on file, we will work with you to get a referral from your child's referring physician.

Who can issue referrals?

TRICARE allows the following provider types to issue ABA services referrals:

- **Primary care managers:** pediatricians, pediatric family medicine physicians, pediatric nurse practitioners
- **Specialized ASD-diagnosing and referring providers:** physicians board-certified or board-eligible in developmental-behavioral or neurodevelopmental pediatrics, pediatric neurology or child psychiatry; PhD clinical psychologists; and specific board-certified doctors of nursing practice (DNPs)

Take note! If your child is an adult (no longer within the age range of a pediatric PCM), he or she must be referred for ABA services by a specialized ASD-diagnosing provider.

How long does it take for HNFS to process the referral?

It can take us up to five business days to process the referral for ABA services. During this time, we will verify the referral received contains all the required elements:

- ASD diagnosis (and any co-morbid diagnoses)
- symptom severity (mild, moderate, severe)
- statement the beneficiary needs ABA services

For beneficiaries entering the ACD on or after Oct. 1, 2021:

If your child's initial ASD diagnosis occurred after age eight or it has been two or more years since the original diagnosis, and this is the first referral for ABA services under TRICARE, we also need a diagnostic evaluation from a TRICARE-authorized ASD-diagnosing provider indicating a definitive ASD diagnosis (if not already on file).

For how long are referrals for ABA services valid and what do they include?

Referrals for ABA services under the ACD are valid for two years and allow for an initial assessment and authorized treatment. Within each two-year referral cycle, care is authorized in six-month periods. The first six-month period will start after the initial assessment.

Key things to remember about referrals for ABA services:

- The two-year referral cycle is calculated every two chronological years from the date a verified referral was received by HNFS.
- Renewals for referrals may be submitted by the referring provider up to six months prior to the end of the two-year referral cycle. If it's within this six-month window, you can ask your child's referring provider to submit a new referral to HNFS.
- At the two-year renewal, we must receive a new referral for ABA services and an updated DSM-5 Diagnostic Checklist from the referring provider.
- If you...
 - want to change providers
 - get a second opinion
 - move within the TRICARE West Region
 - move to the TRICARE East Region**...the referral is still valid as long as it is within the two-year timeline.**
- HNFS will provide you in writing the referral due date so you can monitor it and request a new referral when needed.

How does HNFS assign my child an ABA provider?

Once we have a verified referral on file, we will begin the process of finding an ABA group or individual provider who can render ABA services within TRICARE's access to care standards. We have 15 days from the date we verified the referral to start this process. We'll notify you once we've started.

1. We will first contact ABA providers within a 60-mile radius of your child's home address to ask about availability for the initial assessment and treatment.
2. We will place you with the first provider who meets criteria for accepting a new referral.

Take note! Parent (and referring provider) preferences will be taken into account, but ultimately, we are required to select providers who can meet access-to-care standards. This includes parent preferences for location of services (center/clinic vs. home), time of day (morning, afternoon, evening, weekends) and specific providers or attributes.

Step 2: Completing the Initial Assessment

Once the two-year referral is authorized, your assigned ABA provider has 45 days to complete an initial assessment. However, the assigned provider must schedule a visit with your child to start the assessment within 28 days from when we first verified the referral.

We will contact you or your provider to confirm whether there were any delays in starting the assessment within access-to-care standards.

Take note! If you choose to waive access-to care standards, you or your provider must contact HNFS so we can document the waiver.

Assessment Approval Letters

Providers and beneficiaries can access approval letters online. Log in at www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD.

- Approval letters will contain provider contact information.
- Your ABA provider should contact you within three days of assignment to schedule the initial assessment session.
- If your provider has not connected with you within one week, please contact your ASN (if assigned one) or our ACD customer service line.

Take note! HNFS approval letters sent to the ABA provider will contain the phone number on record in DEERS. If this phone number is not current, you may need to reach out to the ABA provider to schedule the assessment.

What happens during an assessment?

The initial assessment allows for ABA providers to develop a treatment plan that is unique to your child and includes all treatment recommendations and goals. As such, the assessment must include:

- direct observation of your child
- background information (such as diagnoses, family history, how long your child has been receiving ABA services)
- a functional behavior assessment
- results from a parent/caregiver interview and parent report rating scales
- the development of a treatment plan that meets all TRICARE requirements (this will include a current Individual Education Program [IEP] for children receiving ABA services within a public or private school setting)
- the results of the parent PDDBI

Second Opinions – Assessments

You can request a second initial assessment from a different ABA provider.

- Second opinion assessments follow the same requirements as an initial assessment. (A new referral is not required for second opinions if it's within the two-year timeline.)
- The second opinion assessment can be completed by a different ABA provider but only one ABA provider may be authorized to provide treatment at a time.



Outcome Measures

Outcome measures help providers develop treatment plans and evaluate patient improvements (or regression). Under the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD), TRICARE requires the following outcome measures for beneficiaries participating in the ACD based on their age:

- Pervasive Developmental Disorder Behavior Inventory (PDDBI, ages 1.5 to 18.5),
- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, 3rd Edition (Vineland-3, ages 0 to 90),
- Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Edition (SRS-2, ages 2.5 to 99), and either,
- Parenting Stress Index, Fourth Edition, Short Form (PSI-4-SF, ages 12 and under) or Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents (SIPA, ages 11 through 19).

Who performs the outcome measures?

The PDDBI must be executed by the responsible ABA supervisor conducting the assessment. HNFS will authorize the additional four outcome measures to be performed by providers in our preferred outcome measure network. These providers have been identified as being capable of performing all four outcome measures (Vineland, SRS-2, PSI-4-SF, SIPA) for any beneficiary within access-to-care standards.

Take note! This means:

- For the Vineland, SRS-2, PSI-4-SF, and SIPA, your child may be authorized to an ABA provider who is not his or her treating provider.
- HNFS can authorize outcome measures directly to ABA providers without a referral from your child’s primary care manager or ASD-diagnosing provider.
- Outcome measure authorizations are separate from initial assessment/treatment authorizations.
- The outcome measures are all parent reports based on answering questions in a survey format. Your child does not need to be present or participate in the completion of the outcome measures.
- HNFS’ preferred outcome measure network of providers can complete these with you remotely (via email or postal mail) from any location in the TRICARE West Region.
- We must receive scores for all applicable outcome measures before we can authorize the first ABA treatment.



What is the purpose of the PSI-4-SF and SIPA? How do they apply to the core symptoms of autism?

Research has shown that parents’ stress impacts the child and the child’s environment, which may affect their symptoms. The PSI-4-SF and SIPA are standardized, reliable measures of stress and family dynamics that help to identify where additional support resources may benefit both the family and the beneficiary.

Outcome Measure Frequency

Outcome measures must be performed at the following intervals:

Outcome Measure	Baseline (Must be done before HNFS can authorize initial treatment)	Every Six Months	Every Year
Parent PDDBI	X	X	
Teacher PDDBI (completed by the ABA supervisor)		X	
Vineland-3	X		X
SRS-2	X		X
PSI-4 Short Form, Age Based	X	X	
SIPA, Age Based	X	X	



Step 3: Getting Authorized for ABA Services

Now that the initial assessment process is complete, your ABA provider will submit a request for treatment (ABA services) to HNFS.

HNFS will first verify the following:

- TRICARE eligibility
- ACD eligibility
- Treatment plan with parent goals/engagement
- Parent PDDBI scores
- Outcome measures (required before HNFS can authorize treatment)
- Individualized Education Program (IEP), when applicable

We'll then start the clinical review process.

Take note! ABA providers may not render any services prior to the treatment authorization being approved.

Clinical Necessity Reviews – What are they?

HNFS is required to perform clinical necessity reviews on all treatment plans *before* authorizing treatment. We staff qualified, clinical reviewers (BCBAs, BCBA-Ds) to complete the review and make sure the treatment plan coincides with the most appropriate level of care for your child.

What we look for/evaluate:

- A complete treatment plan
- Outcome measures
- Level of clinical support
- Duration of services
- Location of services, if applicable (such as school, community)
- Goals and recommendations
- Services requested that need to be revised or removed (such as services not covered under the ACD)

Clinical Necessity Reviews – What is the process?

- Clinical necessity reviews start once we have received a complete treatment request from the ABA provider and all program requirements are met (eligibility, outcome measures, two-year referral, etc.).
- It takes HNFS up to five business days to complete the review.
- If we need additional information, we'll ask the ABA provider to submit an updated treatment plan.
- Clinical reviewers may request a consultation with the ABA supervisor to discuss elements of the treatment plan.
- After the consultation, we will either complete a coverage determination or request the provider submit an updated treatment plan for further review.

Take note! We will send you a copy of any additional information requests we issue to the ABA provider. If you have questions, please reach out to the ABA provider about the additional information required for the authorization process to continue.



ABA Service Settings

TRICARE allows for ABA services to be rendered in various settings, as clinically appropriate. Regardless of the setting, authorized ABA services must:

- Target the core symptoms of autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Not be an excluded service under the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD)

Part of the clinical necessity review process includes determining the appropriate location where ABA services may be rendered for your child.

Please visit www.tricare.mil/ACD for additional information about settings (locations).

The home is the beneficiary’s residence.

Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services can be by all ABA provider types (as authorized per the treatment plan).• The ABA provider must render active delivery of ABA services that target the core symptoms of ASD.• See “School Settings” for home schooling information.
Clinics/Centers	<p>A clinic (center) is the outpatient ABA clinic or center.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services can be by all ABA provider types (as authorized per the treatment plan).• The ABA provider must render active delivery of ABA services that target the core symptoms of ASD.• Travel to and from a clinic/center is not reimbursable.
School Settings	<p>A school is a preschool, public school, private school or home school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services may be by ABA supervisors (as authorized per the treatment plan).• The ABA supervisor must render active delivery of ABA services that target the core symptoms of ASD.• The services must be focused and time-limited.• ABA services performed by behavior technicians (BTs) or assistant behavior analysts in a school setting are not allowed.• The ABA supervisor may not function as a support aide or observer during care routines or activities (e.g., lunch, group activities, arts and crafts, etc.).• A current Individualized Education Program (IEP) is required. ABA services may not duplicate IEP services.• Academic or educational goals are not covered under the ACD in any setting, including the school setting.• If your child is homeschooled, authorized ABA services must be rendered outside of home-schooling hours. Home-schooling hours cannot overlap ABA services.• Daycare centers/child development centers/after-school programs are not considered school settings under the ACD. (See “Daycare” section.)

Daycare (non-preschool)

A daycare is a daycare center, child development center or after-school program.

- Services may be by all ABA provider types (as authorized per the treatment plan).
- The ABA provider must render active delivery of ABA services that target the core symptoms of ASD.
- ABA providers may not function as support aides or observers during care routines or activities (e.g., lunch, group activities, arts and crafts, etc.).

Community settings

Community settings are any location not part of a home, center/clinic or school setting. Community settings include grocery stores, parks, restaurants, medical offices, or events such as youth sports or local community events.

- Services may be by all ABA provider types (as authorized per the treatment plan).
- The ABA provider must render active delivery of ABA services that target the core symptoms of ASD.
- The services must be focused and time-limited.
- Specific exclusions apply to sporting events, camps and medical appointments for the beneficiary or other family members.
- Exclusions also apply to ABA services rendered during other medical appointments (doctor visits, physical therapy, etc.), to include another family member's appointments.
- Because community settings often do not allow for frequent/repeated treatment opportunities and often target areas not specific to an ASD diagnosis, we use the clinical necessity review process to determine whether a community setting is clinically appropriate, provider types, units, etc.

Telemedicine

Telemedicine is the use of secure video conferencing to provide active delivery of ABA services to beneficiaries at home.

- Audio-only services are not allowed.
- Only the following services are allowed via telehealth when authorized:
 - parent/caregiver guidance by the ABA supervisor or assistant behavior analyst
 - medical conferences by the ABA supervisor
- The ABA supervisor or assistant behavior analyst must render active delivery of ABA services that target the core symptoms of ASD.
- Behavior technicians may not provide services via telehealth.
- Outcome measures are not allowed via telehealth, but may be rendered via an indirect methods (see "Indirect" section).

Indirect

Indirect refers to telephone (no video), email and U.S. postal mail (report writing, reviewing records, etc.).

- Outcome measures may be performed by TRICARE-authorized ASD-diagnosing providers or, when authorized by HNFS, ABA supervisors via indirect methods.

Step 4: Receiving ABA Services

We’ve completed our clinical necessity review and you received confirmation the request for applied behavior analysis (ABA) services has been approved. You now have authorization for treatment! As a reminder, treatment authorizations are approved for a six-month period. Your provider will need to submit a new authorization request for continuing care between 60 and 30 days before the end of the current six-month authorization.

Access to Care Standards – Treatment

Now, let’s look at access to care standards as they apply to treatment.

- ABA providers must start your child’s ABA treatment within 28 calendar days from the last date of service of your child’s assessment.
- ABA providers must render the first parent training session within 30 days of the treatment authorization approval. Also, ABA providers must render a minimum of six parent/caregiver sessions every six months.
- ABA supervisors must complete a direct visit at least one time per month to modify the program and make changes based on the beneficiary’s progress. (There is a financial penalty to ABA providers who fail to meet this requirement.)

Take note! There are exceptions to this if the beneficiary is not available for treatment in a given month.

HNFS must verify the start date for treatment. If access to care standards are not met, we will contact you or your child’s provider to determine the reason for the delay. If you choose to waive access standards, you must notify us so we can document the waiver.

Parent/Guardian Training

An important component of a strong, clinical ABA program includes training parents/caregivers on ABA principles and how to work effectively with the beneficiary to achieve measurable goals and target specific skills.

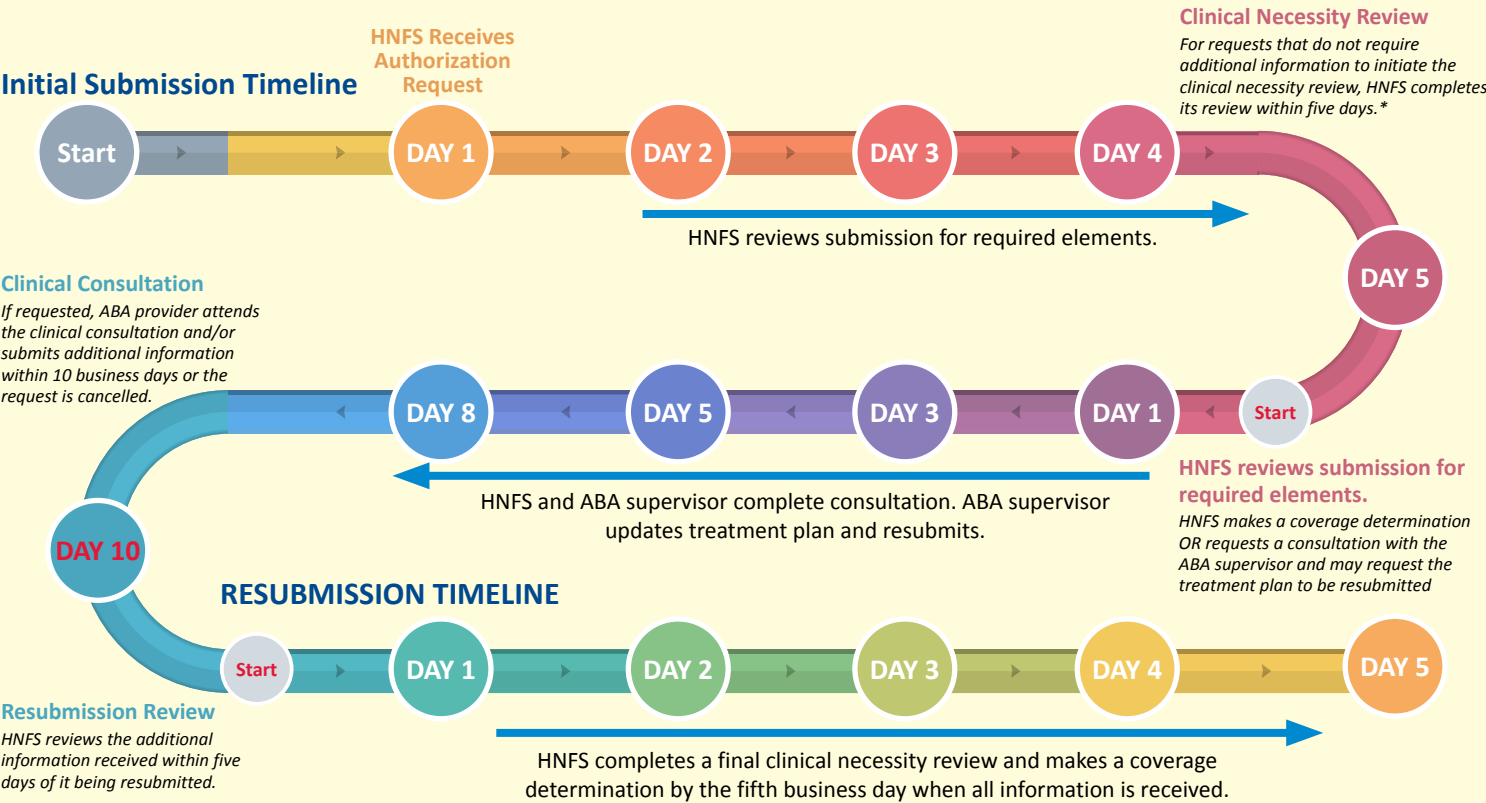
HNFS encourages ABA providers to engage parents/caregivers early and often to increase confidence and competency.

Changing ABA Providers (Second Opinions) – Treatment

If for any reason, you want to change ABA providers, you can start the process by requesting a second opinion.

- If we authorized services to an ABA group, you can work with that group directly to request a change in ABA supervisors, assistant behavior analysts and/or behavior technicians. You will not need a second opinion authorization.
- If we authorized services to a sole provider, or if you want to make a change at the ABA group level, please call our ACD customer service line to request a second opinion authorization.

Processing Timeline



ABA providers are responsible for responding to requests for consultation and/or additional information timely and to prevent possible gaps in care. Requests for reauthorization can be submitted up to 60 days in advance ABA authorizations will not be backdated if there is a lapse in authorization.

*The process restarts if the minimum required elements were not met.

Step 5. Subsequent Authorizations

If your child's ABA provider wants to continue ABA services beyond the initial six-month treatment period, he or she must submit a new request to HNFS before the existing authorization expires.

Take note! Your ABA provider can submit the request up to 60 days prior to end of the current authorization period.

We will review all subsequent treatment requests as we did for the first treatment authorization.

This includes verifying:

- TRICARE eligibility
- ACD eligibility
- Updated treatment plan that documents beneficiary progress
- Parent and teacher PDDBI scores
- Teacher PDDBIs may only be completed by the ABA supervisor
- Outcome measures
- An IEP, when applicable
- Current two-year referral
- Current Comprehensive Care Plan (when an ASN is assigned)

It also includes a new clinical review of the treatment plan. HNFS will review all the prior areas outlined in the treatment as well as:

- Progress toward improved symptom presentation
- Parent engagement
- Outcome measure changes

Referral Cycle Check

When we receive requests to renew authorized services, we will check to make sure your child's existing two-year referral is still valid.

- Remember, since the referral for ABA services is valid for two years, a new referral is not needed for each six-month authorization renewal period.
- If the two-year referral will expire before the start of the next six-month authorization period, you will need to get a new referral from your TRICARE-authorized ASD-diagnosing and referring provider.

Discharge Planning

Your child's ABA provider will develop a discharge plan as part of the initial and ongoing treatment planning process. When it is determined that your child is ready to leave the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD) or be discharged from his/her care, and/or you wish to explore treatment from a different ABA provider, your ABA provider will submit the discharge plan to us.

- ABA providers are directed to give a minimum of a 45-day notice to both HNFS and parents prior to discharge.
- If you have any questions or concerns about the discharge process, please contact our ACD customer service line.

Second Opinions on Discharge

- You may request a second opinion from a different ABA provider to get another clinical recommendation or plan of care. If you have been notified of discharge but would like a second opinion, please contact our ACD customer service line.
- Second opinions follow the same referral, access to care, treatment plan, outcome measure, and process requirements as an initial assessment.
- The second opinion can be completed by a different ABA provider but only one ABA provider may be authorized to provide treatment at a time.



Care Coordination and ABA: The Role of the Autism Services Navigator



This section applies to beneficiaries new to the Autism Care Demonstration as of Oct. 1, 2021.

On Oct. 1, 2021, TRICARE introduced the Autism Services Navigator (ASN) role to the Autism Care Demonstration (ACD). Contractors, such as HNFS, are responsible for assigning ASNs to beneficiaries.

Who is eligible for an ASN?

To be eligible for an ASN, your child must be new to the ACD as of Oct. 1, 2021. You are considered “new” if you:

- Entered the ACD on or after Oct. 1, 2021
- Paused or discontinued services for more than 365 days if in the ACD before Oct. 1, 2021

If you were assigned an ASN and move, you remain eligible for an ASN as long as you continue to meet eligibility requirements.



Take note! Any beneficiary assigned an ASN who declines the services will no longer be eligible for the ACD.

What is an ASN?

ASNs are licensed professional (registered nurses, clinical psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, or other mental health professionals) with clinical experience in pediatrics, behavioral health, mental health, and/or autism spectrum disorder.

Your child’s assigned ASN is your and your child’s health care advocate for navigating the Autism Care Demonstration. ASNs are the central point of contact for you and your child’s providers.

What are the responsibilities of an ASN?

Responsibilities of an ASN include (but are not limited to):

- Develop and maintain comprehensive care plans (CCPs).
- Coordinate medical and mental health care services with your child’s providers.
- Coordinate and participate in medical team conference meetings.
- Help beneficiaries new to the West Region with medical appointments and coordination for those moving from the East Region or within their existing region.
- Help connect you with local resources and supports.
- *Help your child maximize progress through the Autism Care Demonstration!*

Take note! ASNs **do not** perform clinical reviews of ABA treatment plans or make TRICARE coverage determinations.

How long does it take for HNFS to assign my child an ASN?

During the pre-enrollment process, an ASN will reach out to you to discuss the program requirements and the role of the ASN.

Once enrolled into the ACD, HNFS assigns ASNs to eligible beneficiaries within three business days. After enrollment, the assigned ASN will reach out to complete an initial intake evaluation and begin the process for developing a comprehensive care plan.

What if my child entered into the ACD before Oct. 1, 2021?

If your child is not eligible for an ASN, you can still access case management services through HNFS, your assigned military hospital or clinic (if available), or the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP).

HNFS’ case management team offers support to help you coordinate care and services for your child. To get started, visit the “Wellness” section at www.tricare-west.com and click on “Care Management.” You can also connect with our case management team by calling our dedicated case/care management line at 1-844-524-3578.



What is a Comprehensive Care Plan?

Your ASN will develop and maintain a Comprehensive Care Plan (CCP) that serves as a guide for you and your child's providers. ***It's specific to YOUR child.***

A CCP...

- ...Helps ensure all ACD and TRICARE Program requirements are met.
- ...Helps with ACD referrals and authorizations.
- ...Helps you learn how to incorporate behavior lessons at home to maintain consistency with your child's care.
- ...Helps monitor any stress you as a parent might be experiencing (through the PSI/SIPA stress measure).
- ...Helps identify TRICARE benefits that could benefit your child.
- ...Helps identify resources outside of the TRICARE benefit that could benefit your child.
- ...Helps plan your child's short- and long-term care.
- ...Helps ensure outcome measure cycle dates are met.
- ...Helps monitor ECHO & EFMP temporary relief for primary caregivers (when applicable).
- ...Helps set up medical team conferences (when applicable).
- ...Helps identify any other conditions that might physically or mentally affect your child.
- ...Helps you and your child's providers plan for when your child is ready to leave the ACD.

Developing/Updating the CCP

After you first meet with your ASN, the ASN will develop the initial CCP. This happens within the first 90 days of entering into the ACD. After that, your ASN will update the CCP every six months.

CCPs are separate from and do not replace the treatment plans developed by ABA providers. However, the CCP and treatment plan work in tandem to ensure your child is receiving the appropriate services and support.

Take note! You play a role! If your ASN is unable to complete the CCP within 90 days due to family/beneficiary delays in responding to the ASN, approved ABA services will be put on hold until the CCP is completed. If the CCP is not updated every six months, HNFS will be unable to continue to authorize care.



Additional Autism Care Demonstration Resources



General Resources

- Benefits and TRICARE Program overview: www.tricare.mil
- Sign up for ACD-related email alerts: <https://health.mil/autism>
- Sign up for additional Military Health System email updates: <https://public.govdelivery.com>

TRICARE West Region Resources

www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD

- Extensive content on navigating the Autism Care Demonstration in the West Region
- Parent toolkit
- Frequently asked questions
- ECHO registration information
- Provider directory
- Referral, authorization and claim status
- Local resource directory

Take note! Through the <https://familysupport.hnfs.com> website, you have 24/7 access to an online directory of local resources that can connect you with ASD-specific information, resources and social support services available for free or low cost in your community.

When accessing the site (either through <https://familysupport.hnfs.com> or www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD), simply enter your ZIP code, language preference and keyword (such as “autism support group” or “mental health resources”) and click the magnifying glass icon to be connected with the services available in your community. You even have the option to filter the site according to the preferences that work best for your family, such as in person vs. virtual availability and hours of operation (open late, early, weekends).

Find free or reduced cost **education, housing and local support programs** in seconds.

ZIP



Additional External Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/links.html>
- Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA): <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
- Autism Speaks: www.autismspeaks.org
- National Autism Center: www.nationalautismcenter.org
- Autism Society: www.autism-society.org
- BACB: www.bacb.com
- BICC: <https://behavioralcertification.org>
- APBA: www.apbahome.net
- Department of Education (504 Plans): <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>
- Medicaid Autism Services: <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/autism-services/index.html>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/topic-sites/autism/autism-support/index.html>

Contacting HNFS

As a reminder, you can reach HNFS’ ABA Customer Service team by phone at 1-844-866-WEST (9378), option 5 (during business hours) or by email at CS_ABA@healthnet.com.

Helpful Information

Use the below section to help keep track of your child’s important ABA contact information.

Resource	Contact Information
My child’s primary care manager/primary doctor	Click or tap here to enter text.
ASD-diagnosing and referring provider(s)	Click or tap here to enter text.
ABA providers	Click or tap here to enter text.
My child’s assigned Autism Services Navigator	Click or tap here to enter text.
Other helpful contacts	Click or tap here to enter text.

Thank You

HNFS is committed to the health and well-being of our uniformed service members and their families. We are proud to partner with the Department of Defense to improve the lives of those who defend and define our great nation through the TRICARE Program and demonstrations such as the Autism Care Demonstration. *Thank you for your family’s service.*

Common Terms and Acronyms

ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis
ACD	Autism Care Demonstration
ADFM	Active Duty Family Member
ADSM	Active Duty Service Member
ASN	Autism Services Navigator
CCP	Comprehensive Care Plan
CMP	Case Management Program
DEERS	Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System
DOD	Department of Defense
ECHO	Extended Care Health Option
EFMP	Exceptional Family Member Program
HNFS	Health Net Federal Services
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PSI	Psychological Screening Inventory
SIPA	Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents
TFL	TRICARE for Life
TRS	TRICARE Reserve Select
TYA	TRICARE Young Adult

