Embark

Getting started with services for your child with autism spectrum disorder

ABA in PA Initiative www.abainpapa.com
ABA in PA Initiative

Website: https://abainpa.com/
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ABAINAPABAinPA
Twitter: @ABAINAPABAinPA
YouTube channel: ABAinPA
Parent Forum Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/ABAINAPAParentGroup/
Dear Pennsylvania Families,

I wanted to take a moment to introduce myself and the ABA (ABA stand for Applied Behavior Analysis) in PA Initiative. I serve as both the President of the ABA in PA organization and the Section Chief of Behavior and Developmental Pediatrics at the Penn State Health Children’s Hospital. I am a native of Brooklyn, New York, and trained in Boston, Massachusetts. When I transplanted to Pennsylvania in 2010, I was immediately struck by the scarcity of quality, evidence-based treatment for individuals with autism. I made it my mission to make a difference.

In 2012, in a small conference room, the ABA in PA Initiative was born. With a dedicated Board of Directors, and over 100 volunteer ‘change agents’ working throughout the state, we strive to disseminate quality information, and be advocates for families. Our group understands that raising a child with autism comes with its challenges, but it also comes with many joys and triumphs. The hope is that the advocacy the initiative does will make it easier for families to find quality services for their children. Through our website and social media, ABA in PA will continue to share our progress as an advocacy organization as well as helpful information related to autism and quality treatment. We hope the directory of providers on our website is useful, and that our Parent Forum on Facebook provides support and connection among families across Pennsylvania. The members of the ABA in PA Initiative are excited to present to you, Embark and Embark Resources.

Cheryl D. Tierney, MD, MPH
Hello,

You are beginning a journey that I began when our child was diagnosed with autism several years ago. I still clearly remember the anxiety, confusion, anger, and outright denial I felt. I spent every moment worrying about our son’s future and fearing the unknown of all that was in store. It is a journey that is at times soul-crushing, and it will test your strength and patience beyond what you think you can endure. I assure you, though, there are definitely moments of pure celebration when accomplishments and goals are reached. Your child will be as proud as you are in their achievements.

You will find yourself questioning your choices and decisions as well as the advice and intentions of all those around you who are involved in your child’s life. It is important to make sure you are heading on the right path for your child, but know that there is no perfect solution to help “fix” your child. Trust your specialists, trust the proven treatment methods, and above all, trust your child. When the right support are in place, your child will respond and make progress.

The best piece of advice I can give is to seek out other parents. They are often the best resource for good doctors and therapists, judging alternative treatments, understanding education systems, and navigating the nightmare of insurance and medical assistance. But above all, we understand each other. We’ve experienced many of the same things that parents of typically-developing children could never in a hundred years begin to imagine. I encourage you to join our parent forum on the ABA in PA Facebook page to find solace and solidarity in other parents.

www.facebook.com/groups/ABAIInPAParentGroup/

Best of luck,
Gerren Wagner
Welcome to Embark, a guide to provide you with an overview of services available for your child and the first steps you can take in accessing them.
What is the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) in PA Initiative?

Founded in 2012, the ABA in PA Initiative is a not-for-profit organization, made up of parents and professionals in fields of autism service who are committed to improving access to high quality ABA treatment for children and their families. Members of ABA in PA volunteer their time and efforts to support the organization’s mission through active advocacy.

Why is ABA in PA providing this information?

The mission of ABA in PA is to educate families and individuals on ABA, the most up-to-date, effective, evidence-based treatment for autism; and how and where to access ABA and supportive services in Pennsylvania.

What is Autism?

- Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that can result in challenges in behaviors, social skills, and learning, in varied severity.
- Individuals with autism express unique strengths and needs related to social communication and interaction.
- Autism symptoms are different in everyone.
- Autism is a spectrum disorder—meaning that each person’s symptoms, skills, and levels of disability can vary greatly. Individuals with autism often have an uneven neuro-developmental profile, meaning that they might have weak skills in some areas, but very strong skills in other areas.
- Autism is a lifelong journey. With the right strategies and interventions, individuals with autism can improve symptoms and increase independence.
- Individuals with autism learn new skills with targeted teaching methods focused on their learning needs.
What is ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a well studied therapeutic treatment shown to be effective for treating individuals with autism, with more support than any other behavioral or educational intervention. ABA is considered medically necessary as the standard of care for many individuals with autism.

- ABA identifies and teaches new behaviors that the child may need to be successful in learning and getting along with others.
- ABA collects and tracks data on behaviors, to ensure progress is being made.
- ABA uses procedures and practices that are individualized for each child.
- Though most people know ABA from the successful treatment of autism, ABA is used across many disabilities (e.g. ADHD, phobias, addiction, traumatic brain injury rehabilitation) and industries (e.g. employee performance and satisfaction).

When Should I Get ABA?

Research shows that when children are provided with ABA skill-building programs at a young age, they have better outcomes and often can reduce the chance of more severe or dangerous behaviors later in life. However, ABA is appropriate for any age or developmental period. It is never too early or too late to start a quality ABA program.

Where Does ABA Happen?

- In most cases, ABA providers will come to your home to work with your child. This allows for ABA therapists to build intervention plans individually to each family environment, and identify areas of need quickly. In-home services allow for parents and caretakers to learn the teaching methods directly, and increases opportunities for communication and collaboration throughout treatment.
- ABA therapists can also provide services in school, daycare, and other community locations where problems occur or skill development is needed.
- Some center, school, or clinic-based ABA programs are available as well.

How ABA Works

Goals are targeted to meet the needs of the individual
Skills are broken down into a series of manageable steps that are easier to learn
Individuals are provided multiple opportunities to practice and perfect each step of the skill
Success is rewarded with reinforcement, providing a high motivation for improvement
Progress is tracked and changes are made through studying the child’s behavior
Skills are focused on functional use and integration into daily life
Who Provides ABA?

ABA is provided by trained clinicians, who are certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB).

- The role of a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA, or doctorate level, BCBA-D) is to provide the clinical direction for your child, develop behavior plans, and monitor progress.
- Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBA) may also play a lead role in monitoring progress for your child, with supervision from a BCBA or BCBA-D.
- A Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) is the trained individual that will implement the interventions, and usually spends the largest amount of time working directly with your child and family.
- A list of agencies in Pennsylvania (non-exhaustive) that provide ABA services can be found on the ABA in PA Initiative website on the resources page under Provider Directory (https://abainpa.com/resources).

Caution should be used with providers that claim to “use ABA,” but are not certified by the BACB. For example, in Pennsylvania, Licensed Behavior Specialists (LBS) with and Behavior Specialist License (LBS) and Behavior Health Technicians (BHT-ABA) can work with children with autism; however, these providers work under less stringent standards of education and experience. Parents are encouraged to look for the additional qualifications of BCBA, BCaBA, and RBT when searching for high-quality providers and programs.
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE (MA)
Services for your child can become very costly, even with private insurance. Fortunately, a diagnosis of autism allows parents to seek additional funding through Medical Assistance (MA) in Pennsylvania. Information to help you get started accessing funding for services is provided below.

Medical Assistance Eligibility
- A child with an autism spectrum diagnosis is eligible for Medical Assistance (MA) benefits under the Disabled Child category (PH95).
- The Disabled Child category is not based on financial need. Household income does not affect eligibility, unless the income is for the child (survivor’s benefits, trust, etc.).
- MA covers most medical services and therapies, including Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).
- If you have health insurance through an employer, MA is considered secondary insurance.
- If your child is enrolled in a Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) insurance, he/she cannot be covered by both CHIP and MA. Check with your child’s CHIP plan and their coverage of ABA before deciding to switch to MA.

Health Insurance Premium Payment (HIPP) Program
- If your child is covered by a commercial insurance plan through an employer and becomes eligible for MA, you may become enrolled in the HIPP Program.
- The state determines who is enrolled based on cost-effectiveness.
- If you are chosen to be enrolled in HIPP, the state will pay your monthly health insurance premiums for your commercial insurance. MA stays in effect; however, if your child was enrolled in a Managed Care plan through MA (Amerihealth, Aetna, Gateway, etc.), he/she will be disenrolled and placed into the Medical Assistance fee-for-service program. The fee-for-service plan may not be accepted by all of your child’s medical or therapy providers.
- This usually does not impact ABA, but it may be an issue with other providers.
- You can appeal your enrollment in HIPP if you can demonstrate that enrollment is detrimental to your child’s care (see Resources).

Private Insurance Information/ Act 62
- In 2008, the Autism Insurance Act (PA Act 62) went into effect. Act 62 requires commercial insurance companies to pay for the first $36,000 of autism services annually.
- Insurance plans that are self-funded, out of state, or through a company with less than 51 employees are exempt.
- All deductibles and co-pays are still the responsibility of the family, unless your child is also eligible for Medical Assistance.
- Some plans that are exempt under Act 62 will still cover ABA therapy as a part of their benefits package.
- Contact your insurance company for coverage details. If your insurance company does not cover services, you can also appeal to your Human Resources department to request that your employer cover services.
Applying for Medical Assistance for Your Child

When filing an application with the Department of Human Services, you must first apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for your child:

1. Call 1-800-772-1213 (Social Security Administration). SSI is income-based, so your child may not qualify, but this step is required.
2. Within a few days, you will receive an appointment letter. With the appointment letter you can start the application process outlined below.
3. You must be available at the phone number you provided at the time of your appointment to complete this process. Start by telling the agent your income. SSI is a poverty program; therefore, if you earn too much, you will not have to complete the whole process.

You can apply for Medical Assistance online at www.compass.state.pa.us; however, applying on paper ensures that all documents are received as a complete packet by following these steps:

An application for Medical Assistance (Health Care Benefits only – Form 600) must be completed and signed. Write “MA for disabled child only” across the top of the application. Copies of the following documents must be included with the application (they will make copies for you at the County Assistance Office (CAO) if you do not have access to a copier):

1. Appointment letter or letter of determination from Social Security
2. Birth certificates (not all family members, but at least your child’s)
3. Social security cards (not all family members, but at least your child’s)
4. Proof of all income for one month (wages, interest, child support, etc.)
5. Proof of car insurance and registration for all vehicles
6. Any other health insurance for your child
7. Copies of drivers’ licenses
8. Signed release of information for communication with County Assistance Office (included with your application)
9. Proof of disability (evaluations from school and/or physicians and hospitals, preferably with a diagnosis listed)
10. Photo ID (can be school ID) or letter stating you attest to your child’s identity “I attest that ______ is my child and dependent and is a United States Citizen”. The letter needs to be signed, dated, and witnessed.

Drop off or mail the application and all necessary documentation to your County Assistance Office.

After filing the application, you will receive a letter from Department of Human Services with the date the application will be reviewed by the caseworker. You will most likely not need to be present at that time; however, you need to scan the list to make sure you have given all the required information. Complete and return all paperwork sent to you.

This is an annual process. After your child is approved for Medical Assistance, you will receive renewal paperwork that you must complete and submit each year by the date indicated in the packet in order to maintain coverage.
Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS)

ABA services in PA are provided in the community through Pennsylvania’s Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS) program. ABA can be provided by private insurance ABA agencies, or through Medical Assistance (MA) funded agencies.

Depending on the agency you choose and the type of funding you use, the process may vary. However, below are some general ways to get started and some common features to expect in the process.

- Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS) is a community-based state program designed to meet emotional and behavioral health needs of children in PA (ages 0-21).

- Previously referred to as “wraparound services” or Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS), IBHS programs treat various diagnoses, such as depression, anxiety, emotional or conduct disorders, ADHD, as well as autism.

- A written order, or prescription, is required to access ABA through the IBHS program.

Obtain a Written Order for ABA from a Medical or Psychological Professional

- An order for ABA can be written by a licensed physician, licensed psychologist, certified registered nurse practitioner or other licensed professional whose scope of practice includes the diagnosis and treatment of behavioral health disorders. The provider writing the order needs to be enrolled in PA’s Medical Assistance.

- The written order must be based on a face-to-face visit with the professional and is applicable for one year. After 12 months, another face-to-face visit and written order would be required to continue services.

- The written order must be written within 12 months prior to the initiation of ABA services.

- The order must include:
  - A behavioral health disorder diagnosis listed in most recent edition of DSM or ICD
  - An order or recommendation for ABA including:
    - Clinical information to support the medical necessity of each ABA service ordered
    - Maximum number of hours of each ABA service per month
    - Settings where ABA may be provided
    - Measurable improvements in targeted behaviors or skill deficits that indicate when services may be reduced, changed or terminated
**At your appointment**

- The medical or psychological professional providing the written order must be enrolled in PA’s Medical Assistance, even if they do not accept MA insurance. You should verify that your provider is enrolled before your appointment. They should have a “PROMISe number.”

- Most medical and psychological professionals rely heavily on information from the parent(s). Come prepared to give real examples of your child’s problem behaviors, developmental concerns or delays, as well as your child’s strengths. If you have other evaluations that you think are accurate, bring copies of those to share.

- Your child must be present for the appointment. The professional will want to observe and interact with your child in order to assess strengths and needs. Most professionals understand that a child’s behavior can be very different in a novel, clinic setting, compared to daily routines in familiar settings. If your child behaves very differently in the appointment, explain the differences that you observe in other settings.

- Tell the professional your goals for your child, as well as the type and amount of services you would like to see for your child. Be specific that you want ABA by a credentialed provider.

- You can request, and be prescribed, up to 40 hours of ABA services per week! This is the recommended amount of early intensive intervention for autism, combined among ABA providers, parents, teachers, and other caretakers in your child’s life. If you do not need 40 hours, you can be authorized for less, or reduced with your insurance authorization. However, the amount cannot be increased without another written order. We recommend advocating for the maximum number of hours you think your child will need per week.

- The written order requirements are new in 2020. You can take this book with you to your appointment, to ensure your provider knows what must be included in the written order.

- If the evaluator determines that your child does not need ABA services and you disagree, you can seek a second opinion.
Accessing ABA Services

Accessing Services
All ABA agencies must be licensed and compliant under IBHS, however not all agencies must accept MA insurance as payment.

Through a Private Agency/ Private Insurance Provider

• Call your primary insurance to inquire if your insurance plan covers Applied Behavior Analysis. Ask for a list of providers in your area, or utilize the ABA in PA directory to find a provider in your area.

• Call the ABA provider that you are interested in working with to obtain availability information in your area. The provider will gather information from you regarding your child’s diagnosis, written order, and your insurance.

Through MA Funded Providers

• Call Member Services for your child’s Behavioral Health Managed Care Organization (MCO) and ask for a list of providers in your area. The names and contact information for the different MCOs in PA can be found in the Resources section.

• Call the provider that you are interested in working with to obtain availability information in your area. The provider will gather information from you regarding your child’s diagnosis and written order.

Funding Through Fee-for-Service, HIPP, or CHIP

• Call Member Services for details on coverage and agencies in your area. Be sure to note your insurance when calling ABA providers to assist with authorization of service initiation.

Provider Assessment

• Once you have your written order for ABA and have contacted an agency in your area, the provider will contact your primary insurance or MCO to obtain authorization for an assessment.

• Each insurance company may have different requirements for assessment of your child’s needs.
  • The assessment will include observation, testing and data collection of your child’s current behavior and skills in your home, your child’s school, and/or your child’s community setting.
  • Some insurances may require additional standardized tests for parents and caregivers to complete.
  • The ABA provider should assist you with necessary paperwork and explain expectations for the assessment.

• Initial assessment services will begin. Once completed, the ABA provider will send the initial assessment and request for services to the primary insurance.
Accessing ABA Services

Assessment

- When you begin working with an ABA agency, the BCBA or LBS will complete an assessment with you and your child.
- One part of the assessment process may include your BCBA or LBS and RBT (or BHT-ABA) observing and collecting data on your child’s behavior. You will notice that the team may do little to no intervening at times. This is because they want to observe and understand how your child is functioning in his or her natural environment and interactions. Knowing what your child is doing currently can help them decide the best interventions for improvement and skill development.
- Another part of the assessment may include a Functional Behavior Assessment, or FBA. If your child exhibits challenging behavior, an FBA will help the team understand what new skills your child may need to learn in order to stop the unwanted behavior and still have his or her needs expressed or met. Your ABA team may ask you to collect some data at times when they are not in the home, specifically about what was going on before the difficult behavior occurred, and also what occurred to end the behavior.
- Your team may also engage your child and test various developmental skills. Again, you may notice that they do not provide a lot of correction for errors during the assessment period, as they are just looking objectively at what your child can do right now - assessing his or her “starting point.”
- Assessments may also include interviews with parents, or other caretakers that know your child well, or standardized questionnaires for you to fill out.
- When the assessment period is complete, the BCBA (or LBS) will make a recommendation to your insurance for how many hours of service your child should receive in order to make progress. Your team should also suggest goals that they feel will help your child the most, based on the data collected during the assessment period to complement your goals.

Treatment

- Once treatment begins, you should notice your team members working more directly with your child. They should still be collecting data on your child’s behaviors in order to track their progress with goals.
- The interventions your BCBA (or LBS) and RBT (or BHT-ABA) do with your child should be relevant to one of your child’s goals. If you have questions about interventions and how they will work for your child, ask! You, as a parent or caregiver, are an important part of treatment, and should understand the purpose of what you (or other providers) are doing.
- If you are concerned or struggling with an intervention your team suggests, talk to your BCBA or LBS. Your child will make the most progress when interventions are consistent and when everyone is on the same page.
Accessing ABA Services

Re-authorization

- Re-authorization is the process used by the insurance company or MA to determine the medical need for ongoing service and to approve the amount of services that will be paid for in the next authorization period.

- **Re-authorization must take place within the necessary timelines.** If there is a lapse in time between the end of one authorization period and the beginning of the next authorization period, services may be interrupted.

- Written orders will need to be re-evaluated and prescribed yearly.

- Re-authorization processes and documentation for private insurances may vary. Your ABA provider or the insurance specialist for the agency can guide you through the process.

Treatment Plans

- The treatment plan is a document that specifies the goals for your child and tracks updates on progress towards those goals. The treatment plan will also list the interventions planned for your child’s treatment and the team members responsible for carrying out the interventions.

- The different services your child receives may all have their own treatment plans and specific goals. It is helpful to ask providers to share copies of their treatment plans with other individuals working with your child, so that all team members are consistent and work together to maximize progress.

- Goals on your child’s treatment plan should be specific, measurable and observable. That means that they should be written clearly, so that when your child achieves the goal, you will be able to know it happened and see the difference!

- The activities and interventions that your ABA providers work on with your child at home, school, or in the community should be related to achieving the goals defined in the treatment plan.

- Treatment plans will be updated by your ABA provider. Treatment plans must be updated every six months, but can be updated at any time. Therefore, it is not necessary to list every area of need on the treatment plan. It is sometimes better to prioritize a few targets at a time and add more as goals are achieved or priorities revised.

- If your child has not made progress with a goal on the treatment plan, the lead clinician (usually a BCBA or LBS) should propose changes to increase success. This may include changes to the teaching strategies, increasing practice time, or focusing on pre-requisite skills for the goal.
How do I know I am getting quality services?

Beginning in 2020, providers must make quality assurance reports available to families when requested. We recommend that you request a report, read it carefully and ask questions if you have concerns or do not understand something.

Ask about the credentials of your providers and their clinical supervisors. BCBAs and BCBA-Ds have the most requirements for education, supervised experience, and continuing education.

Our child should be making progress, or your ABA team should be collecting data and modifying interventions to attain progress. On the ABA in PA website, there is a document to help you identify if you are receiving quality ABA services. Click on the Resources page and scroll down to document downloads or click here in our online version of Embark.

Some ABA terms you might hear:

Below are some names and acronyms associated with ABA interventions and curriculums. This is not an exhaustive list, it is just to highlight some of the terms you may encounter:

- Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT)
- Natural Environment Training (NET)
- Pivotal Response Training (PRT)
- Precision Teaching
- Functional Communication Training (FCT)
- Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and Functional Analysis (FA)

ABA Curriculums:

- Competent Learner Model (CLM)
- Verbal Behavior Milestone Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP)
- PEAK Relational Training System
- The Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Appeals

- If the primary insurance denies specified hours, there is an appeal process. It may be different for different insurance companies. Contact the appeals department of your insurance company and work with your ABA provider to complete the process.

- If the MCO denies specific hours, there is an appeal, or grievance process. It may be slightly different for each MCO. You can find out more information about how to initiate a grievance on the MCO website or by calling member services for the MCO.
 Appropriately addressing the symptoms of autism often requires the coordinated efforts of a number of professionals. The following charts provide information on related services that may be helpful to your child, depending on their unique needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| **Speech Therapy (ST)/Speech-Language Pathology (SLP)** | • Works to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat delays/concerns in the following areas: speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication, feeding, and swallowing  
  • Assists with difficulty in producing speech, understanding others, sharing thoughts/feelings, social use of verbal and non-verbal communication, organizing thoughts, paying attention, remembering, planning, problem solving, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems (i.e. sign language, pictures, electronic devices) for individuals with severe expressive and/or language comprehension disorders, etc. |
| **Occupational Therapy (OT)**                | • Addresses a combination of cognitive, physical, social-emotional and motor skills to help increase appropriate play, leisure, learning, and self-help skills  
  • Helps to gain age-appropriate independence and participation in activities  
  • Works on daily living skills, toileting, grooming skills, sensory integration, perception skills, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, dressing, handwriting, social participation, etc.                                                                 |
| **Physical Therapy (PT)**                    | • Focuses on problems or limitations with movement, such as motor skills (sitting, crawling, walking, running, jumping, etc.)  
  • Addresses poor muscle tone, balance, coordination, strengthening, functional mobility/motor planning, gross motor skills, etc.  
  • Improvement in participating in daily routines across environments |
## Additional Therapies and Services

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who provides it</th>
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<td><strong>CCC-SLP</strong> (Certified Speech-language pathologist who has earned the Certificate of Clinical Competence) (ASHA-American Speech-Language Hearing Association)  If your child is <em>under the age of 5</em>, contact your local Early Intervention Agency. Services are delivered in the natural environment (in your home/community)</td>
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<td><strong>Occupational Therapy</strong> (OT)  • Addresses a combination of cognitive, physical, social-emotional and motor skills to help increase appropriate play, leisure, learning, and self-help skills  • Helps to gain age-appropriate independence and participation in activities  • Works on daily living skills, toileting, grooming skills, sensory integration, perception skills, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, dressing, handwriting, social participation, etc.</td>
<td><strong>OTR/L</strong> (Registered and Licensed Occupational Therapist)  <strong>COTA</strong> (Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant)  If your child is <em>5 or older</em>, contact the Office of Special Education at your local school district. Services are delivered in the school environment. Additional outpatient services may also be available in a hospital or clinic setting.</td>
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<td><strong>Physical Therapy</strong> (PT)  • Focuses on problems or limitations with movement, such as motor skills (sitting, crawling, walking, running, jumping, etc.)  • Addresses poor muscle tone, balance, coordination, strengthening, functional mobility/motor planning, gross motor skills, etc.  • Improvement in participating in daily routines across environments</td>
<td><strong>PT</strong> (Licensed Physical Therapist)  <strong>DPT</strong> (Doctorate in Physical Therapy)  <strong>CPTA</strong> (Certified Physical Therapy Assistant)  If your child is <em>5 or older</em>, contact the Office of Special Education at your local school district. Services are delivered in the school environment. Additional outpatient services may also be available in a hospital or clinic setting.</td>
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<td>Service</td>
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<td><strong>Case Management</strong></td>
<td>• Helps families to identify appropriate providers and facilities&lt;br&gt;• A collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, care coordination, evaluation, and advocacy for options and services</td>
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<td><strong>Social Skills Training</strong></td>
<td>• Focuses on social deficits such as unusual eye gaze, impaired joint attention, lack of theory of mind (ability to relate to another’s point of view), social “rules” of conversation, etc.&lt;br&gt;• Not an official or certified form of therapy; however, studies have shown social skills training can significantly improve social skill development&lt;br&gt;• Social skills groups are small groups led by an adult teaching skills such as age-appropriate interactions, conversation skills, friendship skills, problem-solving skills, controlling emotions, understanding other people’s perspectives, etc.</td>
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<td><strong>Outpatient Services</strong></td>
<td>• Provides psychological and psychiatric evaluations, on-going medication management, diagnostic assessments&lt;br&gt;• Provides individual, family, and/or group counseling</td>
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<td><strong>Advocacy Support</strong></td>
<td>• Provides information to parents on laws and rights regarding your child’s education, home and community services, other services and/or funding eligibility&lt;br&gt;• Provides remote or in-person support at meetings or appointments to assist parents in understanding communication from their providers and to advocate their preferences to their providers&lt;br&gt;• Agencies may be nonprofit or private. Some advocacy organizations may specialize in specific areas (e.g., education law), while others may provide support across services.</td>
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<td><strong>Case Management</strong></td>
<td><strong>Conduct a search for possible case management options through your county</strong></td>
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<td>• A collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, care coordination, evaluation, and advocacy for options and services</td>
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<td><strong>Case manager</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>May include the following:</td>
<td><strong>ABA in PA DIRECTORY -</strong> <a href="https://abainpa.com/resources">https://abainpa.com/resources</a>**</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Applied Behavior Analysis</td>
<td><strong>May be led by a variety of professionals, and can be taught to caregivers to practice at home or in the community</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Video Modeling</td>
<td><strong>Ask for advice in the ABA in PA Parent Forum on Facebook.</strong></td>
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<td>• Cognitive Behavior Therapy</td>
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<td>• Social Skills Training</td>
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<td>• Social Stories</td>
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<td>• Social Scripts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Licensed therapists, counselors, clinicians, psychologists, psychiatrists</strong></td>
<td><strong>Search for outpatient service providers in your area that specialize in autism</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Consult with your case manager regarding what is available in your area and where to locate resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May be provided by a variety of professionals, including BCBAs, social workers, lawyers, and special education teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parents are encouraged to ask providers for information regarding their education and experience with advocacy</td>
<td><strong>Search for advocacy service providers in your area that specialize in autism or that specialize in the area you would like support</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Consult with your case manager who may have information regarding what is available in your area and where to locate resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ask for advice in the ABA in PA Parent Forum on Facebook</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Did You Know...?**

Your child can access ABA therapy, additional services in the tables above, and educational services described in the next section at the same time. The services can be overlapped and work together to increase your child’s progress. Advocate for all the services your child needs!
Educational Services

Educational Services in PA

Education in Pennsylvania takes many forms ranging from early intervention to school-age public education to alternative approaches such as homeschooling, charter schooling, or cyber schooling. Educational laws state that every child who meets eligibility criteria can receive free and appropriate educational services from birth to 21 years of age. The educational services offered in Pennsylvania are governed by state and federal laws, and may differ based on the age of your child.

**STATE LAW services for children birth to age five: Early Intervention Programming (EI)**

**Overview of EI Services**

- Pennsylvania’s Early Intervention (EI) program provides supports and services to families with children from birth to age five with developmental delays and disabilities.
- EI services have two distinct components, one serving children birth to age three, and another serving ages three to five.

**Age 0-3:**

- EI programs for birth to age three are provided through the child’s local county.
- Services may include educational supports, speech, occupational and/or physical therapy, depending on the needs of your child.
- The model promotes education, coaching and collaboration among parents, service providers and others who are involved with your child, as well as providing direct services to your child.
- Services may be delivered wherever your child spends his or her time.

**Age 3-5:**

- Services for preschoolers from three to five years of age are provided by Intermediate Units (IUs).
- IUs provide several different services to support child and family development.
- Most children attend IU classrooms, which can include children with various disabilities across several local counties. Many of the classrooms are ABA based, and taught by trained special education teachers along with speech, occupational and physical therapists, who are assigned to each classroom.
- Children who are already enrolled in a daycare or preschool are allowed by law to receive special education services in that setting.
Getting Started with EI Services

Eligibility for services is determined by an evaluation process, which can occur at multiple times points:

- Initial evaluation for birth to age three services
- Initial evaluation for ages three to five services OR Transition evaluation from EI (birth to age three) to IU (ages three to five) services
- Transition evaluation from EI/IU services to school-age services
  - The IU assessment team for autism is comprised of a psychologist along with a speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist (if needed), a service coordinator and the family.

If the results of any of the assessments or evaluations determine a need for your child, an individualized education plan (IEP) is developed to specifically address the area(s) of need. The IEP may include services such as parent education, support services (occupational, physical or speech/language therapies), developmental therapies, and other family-centered services that assist in child development.

**EI evaluations, supports, and services are provided at no cost to families.** Parents who want to begin the process or have questions about their child’s development should contact the CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288 or through the website at: [http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/earlyinterventionservices/](http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/earlyinterventionservices/). The CONNECT Helpline also assists families in locating local resources and provides information regarding child development for children birth to age five.

Educational Laws Important to You

**Federal Laws**
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

**Pennsylvania State Laws**
- The Pennsylvania Code - The Pennsylvania Code is a publication of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania listing all rules, regulations, and other administrative documentation. Chapter 14 outlines IDEA and Chapter 15 outlines Section 504
Overview of Head Start Services

Head Start is a federal program that promotes school readiness for children from low-income families and children with disabilities. **At least 10% of a Head Start program’s enrollment must serve children with disabilities, and their families do not need to demonstrate financial need.** Special services are available to ensure that children with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of the program.

Ages 0-3:
- Early Head Start programs serve infants and toddlers under the age of three.
- Services can begin when your child is an infant if your child qualifies.

Ages 3-5:
- Head Start provides a learning environment that supports children’s educational and social-emotional needs.
- Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child’s first and most important teacher, and focuses on supporting family well-being as well as child development.

Getting Started with Head Start Services

For more information on locating an Early Head Start or Head Start program in Pennsylvania near you, access the Head Start Program Locator at [https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator).
School-Aged Services (ages 5-21)

Overview of School-Aged Services

Local school districts assume educational responsibilities of children starting as early as age five and can last through 21 years of age if the individual remains eligible. For some children, school-aged services offer a continuation of the specialized instruction and related services initiated through EI programming. For other children, specialized instruction and/or related services begin when the child reaches school age.

Getting Started with School-Aged Services

• The local school district is the point of contact for all issues related to the education of your child when he/she enters the school-aged system.

• Transition from EI into school age programming:
  • For students who continue to qualify for special education services which originated in the Early Intervention (EI) system, a process has been established to transition from EI into school-age programming.
  • Be sure to contact a representative from the EI agency (often a case manager from the Intermediate Unit, “IU”) for details about this process.
  • This transition ensures that your school district has all of the necessary information, so appropriate programming is available when your child starts school.

• Children without prior EI Services:
  • If specialized instruction and services are not utilized until your child starts school, you will need to request the process of evaluation and identification of needs.
  • A representative from the special education department will most likely be assigned to you for all matters related to evaluations and educational programming if your child qualifies for services.

For detailed information about school-aged special education services in Pennsylvania, please reference the Pennsylvania Parent Guide to Special Education for School-Age Children.
Which Support Plan is Right for My Child?

The 504 Plan:

- A 504 Plan provides services and accommodations to ensure your child has the same access to school programs as non-disabled students. For example, a 504 Plan can be written for your child to have front row seating in a classroom or extra testing time if he/she has attention difficulties.
- More children qualify under the 504 Plan because the 504 Plan only requires that your child has a disability that impacts “major life activity.”

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP):

- An IEP goes further than the 504 Plan by providing “specialized instruction” necessary to meet your child’s unique needs.
- Specialized instruction includes making changes to the learning material, methods or type of instruction, and providing additional services, such as speech therapy or behavioral supports, to meet the needs of your child. An IEP contains goals, objectives, modifications, accommodations, and specific data about your child’s performance in school.
- To be eligible for an IEP, your child’s disability must fall within a specific eligibility category and impact his/her education.
- Children with autism all have varying social deficits. Social deficits often impact education, requiring an IEP.

If you are unsure if your child is on the right plan for his or her needs, speak with your school district special education representatives, seek support of an advocate, or seek the advice of an attorney who specializes in special education law to help you decide.

There are 13 categories of special education that qualify for an IEP:

- autism
- blindness
- deafness
- emotional disturbance
- hearing impairment
- intellectual disability
- multiple disabilities
- orthopedic impairment
- other health impairment
- specific learning disability
- traumatic brain injury
- visual impairment
- speech or language impairment
Advocating For Your Child

- If your child is not receiving educational services, but you have concerns, you can request an evaluation from the school or school district at any time. If you request an evaluation in writing, the school has ten calendar days from receipt of your letter to respond.
- If the school responds by sending you a Permission to Evaluate Form, you should sign and return it. The school will have 60 days (from the date they receive it signed from you) to complete an evaluation and give you an Evaluation Report.
- The school can also choose to send you a Notice of Recommended Placement/ Prior Written Notice (NOREP/ PWN) indicating that they will not evaluate your child. If you disagree, you can appeal this decision.

Did You Know....?

- You can invite anyone you would like to your child’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting. If you have other service providers that know your child, or would like another parent to support you there, or even just to help take notes for you, you can ask the team to include them.
- Also, you can request an IEP team meeting anytime you, as a parent, have new concerns or new information about your child to share.
This next section of Embark contains website links, more in-depth information and resources to help guide you after you have gotten started with the previously described steps. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but we hope it will help you as are ready to learn more and gain the right supports for your family.

There is also an online version of Embark, found on the ABA in PA Initiative website (abainpa.com). In the online version, you will find all of the links active; they can be clicked on to redirect to the resource, for ease of navigating the sites.
Resources for Parents and Caretakers

We encourage families to seek out other families. Experienced parents of children with autism can be strong resources to recommend books, online blogs, and local resources for support. While no two families may have the same exact experience, you will find that many are dedicated to supporting each other with their individual journeys.

Use the links below to communicate with other families, and find online and local in-person support networks.

**ABA in PA Parent Facebook Group**  
https://www.facebook.com/groups/AB AinPAParentGroup/

**ABOARD’s Autism Connection of PA**  
List of Support Groups in PA by county:  
http://autism-support.org/autism-support-groups/pa-autism-support-groups/

**Autism Society of America**  
Search your location for local parent support groups:  

**Parent to Parent**  
The organization’s mission is to link families of children and adults with disabilities or special needs together to a Peer Supporter for purposes of support and information. Peer Supporters are also parents of a child or adult with a disability or special need and are willing to share their experience.  
http://www.parenttoparent.org/
Resources for Teens and Young Adults with Autism

Autism Service, Education, Resources & Training (ASERT):
ASDNext: Connecting teens and adults with autism to information, resources and others in their community.
http://www.paaautism.org/transitionagecommunication/

Autism Speaks information of Self-Advocacy
https://www.autismspeaks.org/self-advocacy

Autism Acceptance Month
Information and links to related to self-awareness, self-advocacy and self-determination.
http://www.autismacceptancemonth.com/resources/self-advocate/
Resources for Siblings of Children with Autism

**Siblings Perspectives: Some Guidelines for Parents,** by Marcia Wheeler

[https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/pages/Siblings-Perspectives-Some-Guidelines-for-Parents](https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/pages/Siblings-Perspectives-Some-Guidelines-for-Parents)

**Organization for Autism Research (OAR), Sibling Support page**

OAR provides 3 booklets, for 3 different audiences (parents, teenage siblings and young siblings) to validate sibling experiences and provide guidance on some challenges they may encounter.

[https://researchautism.org/how-we-help/families/sibling-support/](https://researchautism.org/how-we-help/families/sibling-support/)

**Autism Speaks Family Support Toolkits**

Toolkits designed for Parents, siblings, grandparents and friends, to provide encouragement in understanding and accepting autism diagnoses.

[https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/family-support-tool-kits](https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/family-support-tool-kits)

**The Sibling Support Project**

Offers online groups, books and workshops to support siblings of individuals with special health, developmental and mental health concerns. The organization also helps local communities start SibShops – peer support groups for school aged children.

[https://www.siblingssupport.org/](https://www.siblingssupport.org/)

**Siblings of Autism**

Organization dedicated to supporting the siblings of individuals on the autism spectrum through educational scholarships, respite funds and outreach programs.

[https://siblingsofautism.org/](https://siblingsofautism.org/)
ABA in PA Initiative

Having your child diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder can be scary and overwhelming. Our goal is to provide accurate information about autism and to help parents or caregivers understand effective treatment. Explore the websites and resources in this document as you move forward, to learn more about the diagnosis, treatment, accessing services, and support.

Website: https://abainpa.com/
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ABAinPA
Twitter: @ABAinPA
YouTube channel: ABAinPA
Parent Forum Facebook Page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/ABAInPAParentGroup/
Additional Autism and Initial Diagnosis Resources

**American Autism Association**
https://www.myautism.org/all-about-autism/what-is-autism/

**Autism Speaks** 100 day toolkit for young children
https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/100-day-kit

**Autism Speaks** 100 day toolkit for school age children
https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/tool-kits/100-day-kit-school-age

**Autism Speaks** Early Childhood Milestone Map
https://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/talking_to_parents/Autism_brochure.pdf

**Center for Autism Research** (at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia) Resources page
https://www.centerforautismresearch.org/resources

**Autism Service, Education, Resources & Training (ASERT)**
Early Childhood Screening and Diagnosis
http://www.paautism.org/resources/All-Resources/All-Resources-Details/itemid/8326/Early-Childhood-Screening-and-Diagnosis

![ASERT Logo](image)
It is important that parents/caregivers are able to understand the qualifications of the providers overseeing their child’s treatment. Below you will find the *minimum qualifications and education levels* that are required for some roles and credentials you may come across in seeking treatment. Families are encouraged to ask about the qualifications of their specific providers, as they may vary and may be above the minimum qualifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym &amp; Title</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Supervised Experience</th>
<th>Pass Exam</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BCBA-D</td>
<td>Doctoral degree in an ABA accredited program</td>
<td>1500 hours supervised by a BCBA or BCBA-D, at least 5% of hours worked every 2 weeks*</td>
<td>YES - administered through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCBA</td>
<td>Masters’ degree in applied behavior analysis, psychology or education; required courses must be verified by the BACB</td>
<td>1500 hours supervised by a BCBA or BCBA-D, at least 5% of hours worked every 2 weeks*</td>
<td>YES - administered through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCaBA</td>
<td>Bachelors’ degree with verified coursework in applied behavior analysis</td>
<td>1000 hours, supervised by a BCBA or BCBA-D, for 5% of hours completed within a 2 week period*</td>
<td>YES - administered through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RBT</td>
<td>High school (or equivalent) or higher</td>
<td>Complete Competency Assessment: Must be observed by a BCBA-D, BCBA or BCaBA performing required skills from RBT task list to competency</td>
<td>YES - administered through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*criteria will vary for practicum and intensive practicum programs

**based on full time, 40 hour work week
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On-Going Supervision</th>
<th>Recertification</th>
<th>Continuing Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>BCBA-Ds must recertify with the board (BACB) every 2 years.</td>
<td>32 hours of continuing education every two years, 4 hours of which must relate to professional ethics. (All continuing education must be BCAB approved training.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>BCBAs must recertify with the board (BACB) every 2 years.</td>
<td>32 hours of continuing education every two years, 4 hours of which must relate to professional ethics. (All continuing education must be BCAB approved training.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing supervision by a BCBA or BCBA-D. Supervision occur at least 1 time a month, 3.2 hours total per month**</td>
<td>BCaBAs must recertify with the board (BACB) every 2 years.</td>
<td>20 hours of continuing education every two years, 4 hours of which must relate to professional ethics. (All continuing education must be BCAB approved training.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing supervision by a BACB-D, BCBA or BCaBA at least 2 times per month (including one face-to-face individual supervision and one direct observation of RBT providing service, for 2 hours per month**</td>
<td>RBTs must complete a competency assessment and submit to the board every 1 year.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym &amp; Title</td>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Supervised Experience</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBS Licensed Behavior Specialist</td>
<td>Masters’ degree from in a human services or mental health field AND 45 hours of coursework or training related to ABA</td>
<td>-one year supervised Functional Behavior Assessment experience with children -1000 supervised hours of in-person experience working with individuals with autism or behavioral challenges -Supervisor does not need to be licensed or certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-ABA Behavior Consultant - Applied Behavior Analysis</td>
<td>Hold an LBS or other approved state license AND -40 hours of approved training in ABA plus supervised experience (next column) <strong>OR</strong> -12 credits in ABA from a college and one year full time experience doing ABA (with no specified supervision)</td>
<td>-One year of full-time experience in the provision of ABA under the supervision of a BCBA (along with the 40 hours of training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aBC-ABA Assistant Behavior Consultant - Applied Behavior Analysis</td>
<td>-Meet the educational requirements for LBS (without experience requirement) <strong>OR</strong> -12 credits in ABA from a college or university and six months experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHT-ABA Behavioral Health Technician - Applied Behavior Analysis</td>
<td>-Two years experience providing ABA and 40 hours training related to ABA <strong>OR</strong> High school diploma and completed 40 hour training for the RBT (without competency assessment or credentialing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym &amp; Title</td>
<td>On-Going Supervision</td>
<td>Recertification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSLs</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>One hour of supervision from a Clinical Director each month. One additional hour if the BC-ABA supervises BHT-ABA services. 30 minutes supervised with a client present every six months by a clinical director*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC-ABA</td>
<td>One hour of supervision from a Clinical Director or BC-ABA each month. One additional hour if the aBC-ABA supervises BHT-ABA services. 30 minutes supervised with a client present every six months by a clinical director*</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aBC-ABA</td>
<td>Working less than 37.5 hours per week: two 1 hour sessions of supervision are required per month without a client present and 1 hour observation by BC-ABA or aBC-ABA during service provision every 2 months. Working more than 37.5 hours per week: 1 hour supervision per week without client present and 1 hour observation by a BC-ABA or aBC-ABA every 2 months.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*based on full time, 40 hour work week
Additional Applied Behavior Analysis Resources

The website for the **Behavior Analyst Certification Board** contains information about becoming certified as a BCBA-D, BCBA, BcbaBA, and RBT. Parents can also use the site to find a BCBA in their area, or verify that a provider is credentialed with the BACB.

https://www.bacb.com/

**Autism Service, Education, Resources & Training (ASERT)**

Applied Behavior Analysis resources

[http://www.paautism.org/resources/All-Resources/All-Resources-Details/itemid/8310/Applied-Behavior-Analysis-ABA-Resource-Collection](http://www.paautism.org/resources/All-Resources/All-Resources-Details/itemid/8310/Applied-Behavior-Analysis-ABA-Resource-Collection)

**Autism Speaks** provides a booklet of information about Applied Behavior Analysis

[https://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/sciencedocs/atn/atn_air-p_applied_behavior_analysis.pdf](https://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/sciencedocs/atn/atn_air-p_applied_behavior_analysis.pdf)

**The ABA in PA provider directory** includes a (non-exhaustive) list of ABA providers in Pennsylvania

https://abainpa.com/resources
Resources for Accessing ABA Services

Information on advocacy for autism treatment coverage and how to navigate private insurance.


Below is a list of Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), which authorize and fund services through Medical Assistance. On each MCO website, you will be able to find contact information for providers, their process for funding behavioral treatment, complaints and grievances.

- Community Care Behavioral Health Organization
  https://www.ccbh.com/
- Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disabilities Services-Community Behavioral Health
  https://dbhids.org/cbh/
- Magellan
  https://www.magellanofpa.com/
- PerformCare
  https://pa.performcare.org/index.aspx
- Value Behavioral Health of PA
  http://www.vbh-pa.com/

Pennsylvania Health Law Project IBHS description and guide

The ABA in PA provider directory includes a (non-exhaustive) list of IBHS providers in Pennsylvania
https://abainpa.com/resources

Disabilities Rights Network - Pennsylvania
Disability Rights Pennsylvania protects and advocates for rights of people with disabilities. They can be a resource for families who are denied funding for or access to quality services.
https://www.disabilityrightspa.org/
Further Information About Funding Services

It is important to understand how treatment is covered through either your primary and/or secondary (MA) insurance. If your child is covered under a private health insurance, you should call the member line on the back of the card to obtain information on ABA coverage.

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services website regarding PA Autism Insurance Act (Act62)

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services website regarding Health Insurance Premium Payment (HIPP) Program
https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/Medical/HIPP-Program.aspx

Pennsylvania Health Law Project (PHLP) Guide Book for Obtaining Medical Assistance (MA) for a child with a disability

PHLP Medical Assistance Fact Sheet
https://www.phlp.org/uploads/attachments/ck34vps9s07hg51u8ju1xlfry-fact-sheet-for-families-accessing-care-under-medical-assistance.pdf

Apply for Medical Assistance online
https://www.compass.state.pa.us/compass.web/Public/CMPHome
Family Grants and Gifts

In addition to private insurance and Medical Assistance (MA), there are some grant and gift opportunities families with children with autism. Below is one local Pennsylvania gift organization, and a link to Autism Speaks’ family grant website. If your family is in need of specific resources, be sure to look for and ask about grants and gifts, locally, statewide, and nationally. Funding availability may vary.

Andrew’s Gift
Andrew’s Gift was developed to provide support to individuals with an autism spectrum disorder and their families. Family members and individuals living in Dauphin, Cumberland, or Perry Counties may apply for grant money to be used for things that directly improve the life of an individual with autism.

https://www.andrewsgift26.com/

Autism Speaks maintains a list of national family grant opportunities:
https://www.autismspeaks.org/family-services/resource-library/family-grant-opportunities

We recommend that if you are having trouble finding or accessing quality ABA that you reach out to DRN-PA via email at rmann@drnpa.org and copy ABA@pa.gov
More on Additional Therapies and Services

**Autism Service, Education, Resources & Training (ASERT):**
What to look for when choosing a therapist:
https://paautism.org/resource/finding-choosing-therapist-services-provider/

**ASERT: Speech services and Autism Spectrum Disorders:**
https://paautism.org/resource/speech-language-therapy-communication/

**American Speech-Language-Hearing Association:**
https://www.asha.org/public/speech/

**ASERT: Occupational Therapy and Autism Spectrum Disorders:**
https://paautism.org/resource/occupational-therapys-services/

**American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.:**
https://www.aota.org/Conference-Events/OTMonth/what-is-OT.aspx

**ASERT: Physical Therapy Services:**
https://paautism.org/resource/physical-therapy-health-physician/

**Social skills groups:**
https://www.autismspeaks.org/social-skills-and-autism

**ABA in PA provider directory** - (non-exhaustive) list of social skills groups in PA
https://abainpa.com/resources

**ASERT Early Childhood Learning Centers/Day Care Services for children with autism**

**The Arc of Pennsylvania**
An advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabiities.
http://thearcpa.org/
Health Care Quality Units
The Health Care Quality Units (HCQUs) work to support and improve the health information and knowledge for the intellectual disabilities community service system by building capacity and competency within the physical and behavioral health care systems as well as the stakeholders of the ID system. HCQUs support complex care needs of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

National Autism Center’s National Standards Report for effective treatments for individuals with autism:

Association for Science in Autism Treatment
https://www.asatonline.org/

Autism Watch
Among other resources, the website contains links to scientifically reviewed theories, therapies and methods, to recommend those that have been shown to be effective and those that have not. It includes a list of recommended and not recommended information sources.
https://www.autism-watch.org/
Early Intervention (EI): Some children, with specific genetic and medical factors present at birth, are automatically entitled to a birth to age three evaluation. There are several criterion that one must meet in order to receive an evaluation. One of those qualifying criterion is having a sibling with autism. So even if the sibling is not exhibiting symptoms, parents can request that the sibling be followed, so that any delays are identified and treated early.

However, any parent at any time from birth to age 5 can request an evaluation through EI or the Intermediate Unit (IU).

Autism Service, Education, Resources & Training (ASERT) links for Early Intervention:
https://paautism.org/resource/early-intervention-development-delay-infant/

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)
A Family’s Introduction to Early Intervention in Pennsylvania
https://www.pattan.net/publications/a-family-s-introduction-to-early-intervention-in-p/

ASERT quick link to finding your county assistance office contact information:
https://paautism.org/resource/county-government-offices/
Educational Information Resources

Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units and PA Map of IU areas
https://paiu.org/Find-an-IU

Local Task Force
The Local Task Force is a group of parents and professionals working together to ensure that the intent and spirit of the Right to Education Consent Agreement is carried out throughout Pennsylvania. Contact your Intermediate Unit to find information on your local task force.

State Task Force on the Right to Education
Phone: 1-800-446-5607 ext. 6828
https://www.pattan.net/About-Us/Partners/State-Task-Force

Special Education Timelines
According to Pennsylvania law, special education services must be delivered according to specific timelines. This guide explains those timelines in detail.
https://www.pattan.net/Publications/Special-Education-Timelines

Bureau of Special Education’s ConsultLine, A Parent Helpline
The ConsultLine is designed to assist parents and advocates of children with disabilities with any questions concerning their child’s special education program or the laws related to the provision of services in their child’s IEP (Individualized Educational Program).
Phone: 800-879-2301
https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Special%20Education/Complaints/Pages/ConsultLine.aspx
Educational Services

Educational Information Resources

Mission Empower
Mission Empower provides advocacy, education, and the promotion of inclusion, to assist families and their children with disabilities.
Phone: 814-825-0788
http://missionempower.org/

Office for Dispute Resolution
The Office for Dispute Resolution (ODR) provides the resources for parents and educational agencies to resolve educational disputes for children served by the early intervention system, students who are gifted (or thought to be gifted), and students with disabilities (or thought to have disabilities).
Phone: 800-222-3353
http://odr-pa.org/

Hispanos Unidos Para Niños Excepcionales (Philadelphia Hune, INC)
HUNE is a not-for-profit organization that provides free bilingual English and Spanish training, technical assistance and individual assistance to parents of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and to professionals who work with children.
Phone: 215-425-6203
http://www.huneinc.org/
Educational Information Resources

Parent Education and Advocacy Leadership Center (PEAL)
The mission of the PEAL Center is to ensure that children, youth, and adults with disabilities and special health care needs lead rich, active lives and participate as full members of their schools and communities by providing training, information, parent leadership, and technical assistance based on best practices to individuals and families and all people who support them.
Phone: 866-950-1040
https://pealcenter.org/

The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTaN) - Autism Initiatives
The mission of the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network is to support the efforts and initiatives of the Bureau of Special Education, and to build the capacity of local educational agencies to serve students who receive special education services. The website includes blog posts, articles and videos that may be helpful to families.
Phone: 800-360-7282
https://www.pattan.net/Disabilities/Autism/Autism-Initiative-ABA-Supports-1