Subject: Applied Behavioral Analysis (Lovaas Therapy)*

Effective Date: February 27, 2007

Department(s): Utilization Management

Policy: Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), also known as Lovaas therapy, is reimbursable under Plans administered by QualCare, Inc.

Objective: To assure proper and consistent reimbursement and to define criteria for coverage of a specific therapeutic intervention.

Procedure: I. With regard to coverage of ABA, the following conditions will apply:

A. The member must have the diagnosis of autism (ICD-9 299.0, 299.00, 299.01)

AND

B. It will be applied to the Mental/Behavioral Health benefit AND

C. ABA must be administered by or under the supervision of an individual or individuals certified, in the state in which they practice, by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board as either a Board Certified Behavior Analyst™ (BCBA®) or a Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst™ (BCaBA®)

II. For ABA to be reimbursable, the diagnosis of autism must be based on criteria from Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed (DSM-IV) as follows:

A. A total of at least six features from the three lists below, with at least two from (1) and one each from (2) and (3):
(1) qualitative impairment in social interaction, as manifested by at least two of the following:
   a. marked impairment in the use of multiple nonverbal behaviors such as eye-to-eye gaze, facial expression, body postures, and gestures to regulate social interaction
   b. failure to develop peer relationships appropriate to developmental level
   c. a lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests, or achievements with other people (e.g., by a lack of showing, bringing, or pointing out objects of interest)
   d. lack of social or emotional reciprocity

(2) qualitative impairments in communication as manifested by at least one of the following:
   a. a delay in, or total lack of, the development of spoken language (not accompanied by an attempt to compensate through alternative modes of communication such as gesture or mime)
   b. in individuals with adequate speech, marked impairment in the ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others
   c. stereotyped and repetitive use of language or idiosyncratic language
   d. lack of varied, spontaneous make-believe play or social imitative play appropriate to developmental level

(3) restricted repetitive and stereotyped patterns of behavior, interests, and activities, as manifested by at least one of the following:
   a. encompassing preoccupation with one or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus
   b. apparently inflexible adherence to specific, nonfunctional routines or rituals
   c. stereotyped and repetitive motor mannerisms (e.g., hand or finger flapping or twisting, or complex whole-body movements
   d. persistent preoccupation with parts of objects
B. There must be delays or abnormal functioning in at least one of the following areas, with onset prior to age 3 years:

(1) Social interaction

OR

(2) Language as used in social communication

OR

(3) Symbolic or imaginative play

C. The disturbance is not better accounted for by Rett’s disorder or childhood disintegrative disorder.

III. For individuals with either childhood disintegrative disorder (299.10) or Rett’s disorder (299.80) ABA is not reimbursable under any circumstances.

IV. Unless otherwise specified in the SPD, ABA will be authorized for an initial period of six months.

V. For ABA to continue to be authorized after the initial six months there must be a written update from the provider documenting progress and improvement in manifestations in II.A and II.B above.

References

Behavior Analyst Certification Board. Consumer Information; Standards for Certification. Available at www.bacb.com. Accessed 02/14/09 and 02/22/09


BehaveNet® Clinical Capsule™ Diagnostic criteria for 299.10 Childhood Disintegrative Disorder 299.10. Available at http://behavenet.com/capsules/disorders/childisintdis.htm. Accessed 02/01/09


State of New Jersey. 212th Legislature. Assembly, No. 999 (Senate No. 105) Sponsored by Prieto V, Manzo LM, Voss JM. Available at [http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bills/BillsByNumber.asp](http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bills/BillsByNumber.asp) Accessed 02/01/09


Drafted By/Date:  B. Fisher, MD 01/15/07  
Approved By/Date:  QM Committee 02/27/07  
Revised By/Date:  B. Fisher, MD 02/09 – 10/09  
Approved By/Date:  QM Committee 10/27/09  
Reviewed without Revision By/Date:  M. McNeil, MD 10/10/11  
Approved By/Date:  QM Committee 10/25/11  

*Consistent with Summary Plan Description (SPD). When there is discordance between this policy and the SPD, the provisions of the SPD prevail.*