

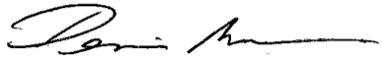


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April 10, 2016

**NUMBER:**  
**OMHSAS-16-02**

**SUBJECT:**  
Training and Supervision Requirements for Therapeutic Staff Support Workers that Implement Treatment Plans that Include Applied Behavioral Analysis

**BY:**  
  
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Deputy Secretary  
Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

**SCOPE:**

This bulletin applies to all qualified enrolled providers approved to render Therapeutic Staff Support (TSS) services to children under 21 years of age in the Fee-for-Service and the HealthChoices behavioral health managed care delivery systems.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this bulletin is to clarify the minimum training qualifications and supervision requirements for TSS workers that implement a treatment plan that includes Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) if the child or adolescent the TSS worker is serving is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

**BACKGROUND:**

TSS services were added to the Medical Assistance (MA) program Fee Schedule on January 1, 1994 through the issuance of MA Bulletin 01-94-01, "Outpatient Psychiatric Services for Children Under 21 Years of Age." MA Bulletin 01-01-05, "Revisions to Policies and Procedures Relating to Mobile Therapy, Behavioral Specialist Consultant and Therapeutic Staff Support Services," established training and supervision requirements for TSS workers. This bulletin clarifies the training and supervision requirements for TSS workers who serve children or adolescents diagnosed with ASD and implement treatment plans that include ABA.

**DISCUSSION:**

MA Bulletin 01-01-05 describes the training that new TSS workers must undergo before working with children, within the first six months of working with children, and on a yearly basis. It is important that TSS workers who implement treatment plans that include ABA receive training in ABA so that they understand the basic principles of ABA and are able to carry out the specific procedures and techniques used in the treatment plans they are implementing. For this reason, the Department is clarifying that, as set forth below, a specified number of the required hours of the training for TSS workers who serve children or adolescents diagnosed with ASD and implement treatment plans that includes ABA must be in ABA.

**COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:**  
Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Bureau of Children's Behavioral Health Services P.O. Box 2675, Harrisburg, PA 17105. General Office Number: 717-705-8289.

## I. Initial training requirements

MA Bulletin 01-01-05 requires new TSS workers to complete a minimum of 15 hours of training prior to working alone with children or adolescents. For new TSS workers who will be implementing a treatment plan that includes ABA, at least 6 of the required 15 hours of training must be in ABA.

MA Bulletin 01-01-05 also requires new TSS workers to complete no less than an additional 24 hours of training within the first 6 months of working with children and adolescents. For TSS workers implementing a treatment plan that includes ABA, at least 6 of the required 24 hours must be in ABA.

If a TSS worker who is not a new TSS worker is currently implementing a treatment plan that includes ABA and does not have documented training in ABA, the TSS worker must complete within 6 months of the effective date of this bulletin at least 6 hours of training in ABA. If a TSS worker is not a new TSS worker and is not currently implementing a treatment plan that includes ABA, the TSS worker must complete at least 6 hours of training in ABA prior to implementing a treatment plan that includes ABA.

## II. Ongoing training requirements

MA Bulletin 01-01-05 requires that after the first year of employment all TSS workers receive at least 20 hours of training each year. For TSS workers implementing a treatment plan that includes ABA, at least 6 of the required 20 hours must be in ABA.

MA Bulletin 01-01-05 specifies an overall training curriculum for TSS workers. Training specific to ABA could be incorporated into several of the specified training topics, including the specific diagnosis of the children or adolescents served by the TSS worker; the role of the TSS worker in the home, school and community; behavior management skills; or topics on child development.

All training must be documented as described in the "Record Keeping" section of Bulletin 01-01-05.

Finally, for TSS workers implementing a treatment plan that includes ABA, the weekly supervision required in MA Bulletin 01-01-05 should address the ongoing implementation of ABA interventions in accordance with the child's or adolescent's treatment plan.

### **RELATED BULLETINS:**

MAB 01-94-01: Outpatient Psychiatric Services for Children Under 21 Years of Age

MAB 01-01-05: Revisions to Policies and Procedures Relating to Mobile Therapy, Behavioral Specialist Consultant and Therapeutic Staff Support Services