Parent Toolkit

HEALTH NET FEDERAL SERVICES
A Wholly-Owned Subsidiary of Centene Corporation

TRICARE®

New to the **Autism Care Demonstration**

January 2024

The *Parent Toolkit: New to the Autism Care Demonstration* was designed to help a parent or caregiver understand Autism Care Demonstration building blocks and the many components working together in support of their child. This toolkit describes each step of the program — from eligibility and initial assessment to reauthorization and, eventually, discharge and transition.

At the time of publication, Jan. 1, 2024, the information in the *Parent Toolkit: New to the Autism Care Demonstration* is current.

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Table of Contents

Welcome to the Autism Care Demonstration 1

(Section 1.0) Introduction 2

Your TRICARE West Region Contractor – Health Net Federal Services 3

How to Contact Us 3

(Section 2.0) Learning Objectives 4

(Section 3.0) Services Available to Beneficiaries With Autism Spectrum Disorder 5

TRICARE Basic Benefit 5

Supplemental Programs 5

Extended Care Health Option 5

Qualifying 5

Registering 6

Other Services 6

Autism Care Demonstration Applied Behavior Analysis Services 6

(Section 4.0) Benefits Under the Autism Care Demonstration 7

Applied Behavior Analysis 7

What to Expect in an Applied Behavior Analysis Program 8

Autism Services Navigators 8

(Section 5.0) Applied Behavior Analysis Provider Types 9

Applied Behavior Analysis Supervisors 9

TRICARE-Authorized Provider Types 9

Certification Requirements 9

Assistant Behavior Analysts 9

TRICARE-Authorized Provider Types 9

Certification Requirements 10

Behavior Technicians 10

TRICARE-Authorized Provider Types 10

Certification Requirements 10

Sole and Tiered Service Delivery Models 10

Applied Behavior Analysis Provider Audits 11

(Section 6.0) Autism Care Demonstration Participation 12

TRICARE Plan Types 12

Before Getting Care Under the Autism Care Demonstration (Pre-Enrollment Support) 13

Autism Services Coordinators 13

Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis 13

Request for Autism Care Demonstration Services 14

(Section 7.0) Receiving Care Under the Autism Care Demonstration 15
Step 1: Getting Referred for Applied Behavior Analysis Services 15
Providers Who Can Issue Applied Behavior Analysis Services Referrals 15
Time Frame for HNFS to Process Referrals 15
Length of Referral 16
Key Things to Remember 16
Assigning Applied Behavior Analysis Providers 16
1. Contacting Applied Behavior Analysis Providers 16
2. Selecting an Applied Behavior Analysis Provider 16
Step 2: Completing the Initial Assessment 17
Assessment Approval Letters 17
Initial Assessment 18
Second Opinion – Assessments 18
Outcome Measures 18
Providers Who Can Perform Outcome Measures 19
Frequency 20
Step 3: Getting Authorized for Applied Behavior Analysis Services 20
The Role of Clinical Necessity Reviews 20
Clinical Necessity Review Steps 21
Service Settings 21
Step 4: Receiving Applied Behavior Analysis Services 23
Access-to-Care Standards – Treatment 23
Parent/Caregiver Training 23
Changing Applied Behavior Analysis Providers (Second Opinions) – Treatment 23
Step 5: Subsequent Authorizations 24
Referral Cycle Check 25
Discharge Planning 25
Second Opinions on Discharge 25
(Section 8.0) Care Coordination and the Autism Care Demonstration: Autism Services Navigators 26
Autism Services Navigators 26
Role Responsibilities 26
Time Frame for Assignment 26
Beneficiary Eligibility for an Autism Services Navigator 26
Options if Not Eligible for an Autism Services Navigator 26
Comprehensive Care Plans 27
Developing and/or Updating Comprehensive Care Plans 27

(Section 9.0) Additional Autism Care Demonstration Resources and Contact Information **28**
General Resources 28
www.tricare.mil 28
health.mil/autism 28
https://public.govdelivery.com 28
West Region-Specific Resources 28
www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD 28
familysupport.hnfs.com 28
Additional External Resources and Contact Information 29
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 29
Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA) 29
Autism Speaks 29
National Autism Center at May Institute 29
Autism Society 29
Department of Education (504 Plans) 29
Medicaid Autism Services 29
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 29
Contacting HNFS 29
Appointments and Contacts Sheets 29
(Section 10.0) List of Abbreviations and Acronyms **30**
Thank You **32**
(Appendix A) Appointments and Contacts **33**
Autism Care Demonstration Appointments 34
Autism Care Demonstration Team Contacts 35

Welcome to the Autism Care Demonstration

We designed the *Parent Toolkit: New to the Autism Care Demonstration* to help you understand the building blocks of the Autism Care Demonstration and the many components working together to support your child.

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.

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

(Section 1.0)
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 available to help you grow and reinforce your existing capabilities. This is all administered through a network of highly qualified medical, behavioral and support staff.

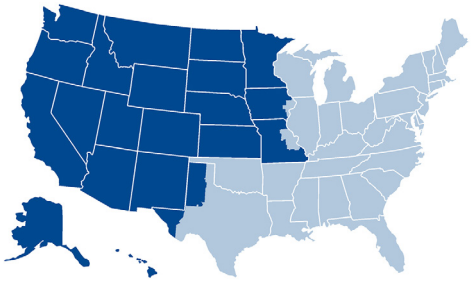
ABA services are a set of techniques based on behavior modification principles, like positive reinforcement, to increase or decrease targeted behaviors. ABA services can help develop skills like language and social interaction. These services also can help to decrease behaviors that interfere with daily living activities. TRICARE covers clinically necessary and appropriate ABA services that target core ASD symptoms.

We encourage you to visit **www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD**. There, you'll find information and materials, like this toolkit, that will help you navigate the wealth of support services available to you and the steps involved in accessing care.

A reference guide of abbreviations and acronyms used throughout this course is provided in **(Section 10.0) List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.**

Your TRICARE West Region Contractor – Health Net Federal Services

WEST Region EAST Region



TRICARE is available worldwide and managed regionally. There are two TRICARE regions in the United States – the TRICARE East Region (East Region) and TRICARE West Region (West Region). 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 East Region, which is administered by Humana Military. Learn more at the **Humana Military** website.

How to Contact Us

HNFS offers a dedicated team to help you with your ACD questions. You also can direct your providers, local military hospital or clinic, and organizations (such as the Exceptional Family Member Program [EFMP]) to these resources and contact information.

Method	Details	Resources
ACD Customer Service Line	**1-844-WEST (9378)**, follow the prompts Monday through Friday, 5 a.m.-9 p.m. PT **Note:** Provider locator services available 24/7 through **1-844-866-WEST (9378)**.	Dedicated ACD team available to assist you with: • Eligibility • Benefits • Finding a provider • Authorizations and referrals • Claims • Moving • Access to care **…and more!**
Email	CS_ABA@hnfs.com	Email your ACD-specific questions to our dedicated ACD team.
Online	www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD	• ACD-specific content • HNFS' network provider and ACD-specific provider directories • West Region local resources • Secure *Ask Us* email for claims inquiries (login required)

(Section 2.0)
Learning Objectives

The *Parent Toolkit: New to the Autism Care Demonstration* will help you become familiar with:

- Services available to beneficiaries with diagnoses of ASD through the TRICARE basic benefit, supplemental programs and the ACD.
- ACD benefits.
- Enrollment requirements.
- Referrals and authorizations.
- Autism Services Navigators (ASN), including who is eligible and how ASNs can help.
- How to locate more information and resources.

(Section 3.0) Services Available to Beneficiaries With Autism Spectrum Disorder

TRICARE beneficiaries diagnosed with 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 therapies
- Prescription medication
- Psychotherapy and counseling
- Parent/caregiver-mediated programs

For more information about TRICARE-covered services, visit **www.tricare.mil/coveredservices**.

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 (ADFM) 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!***
> **The child of an active duty service member (ADSM) must be registered in ECHO to participate in the ACD. Registration deadlines may apply.**

ECHO benefits commonly used by beneficiaries diagnosed with ASD include:

- **Respite care.** Up to 16 hours of respite care a month.
- **Supplies.** Such as incontinence supplies, diapers, etc.
- **Durable medical equipment.** Such as assistive technology applications.
- **Training.** For example, how to use assistive technology devices.
- **Assistive services.** For example, services provided by a qualified interpreter or translator.

Qualifying

To qualify for ECHO, beneficiaries must:

1. Be enrolled in the **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**.

Registering

HNFS reviews and processes ECHO registration requests for the 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 that the family member of the ADSM is enrolled in EFMP. Visit Military OneSource's **EFMP** page for more information.

Acceptable documents to show proof of EFMP enrollment:

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

Other Services

Other services available to support a beneficiary with a diagnosis of ASD include:

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

Autism Care Demonstration Applied Behavior Analysis Services

TRICARE's ACD allows for clinically necessary and appropriate ABA services to be rendered to TRICARE-eligible beneficiaries diagnosed with ASD.

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 [TOM], Chapter 18, Section 4).

Under the ACD, ABA providers are authorized to render ABA services for core ASD symptoms.

(Section 4.0)
Benefits Under the Autism Care Demonstration

Applied Behavior Analysis

Under the ACD, ABA is a type of service that focuses on specific behaviors that affect individuals with a diagnosis of ASD. The overall goal of ABA is to decrease challenging/interfering behaviors and teach appropriate replacement behaviors to improve the quality of life for you and your child and family, ultimately reducing or eliminating the need for 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 ACD depends on the beneficiary's individual needs as determined by assessments and treatment progress.**

A beneficiary diagnosed with ASD will get the most out of ABA treatment received under the ACD when the beneficiary's family members/caregivers actively participate and consistently reinforce learned treatment plan interventions at home and in community settings.

What to Expect in an Applied Behavior Analysis Program

Services

- Initial assessments and reassessments
- Development of a treatment plan
- One-on-one ABA services
- Training of immediate family members on ABA principles and techniques
- Program modifications based on the progress of treatment plan goals, outcome measures and parent/caregiver engagement

Age limitations

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

Autism Services Navigators

On Oct. 1, 2021, TRICARE introduced the ASN role to the ACD.

All beneficiaries who have entered the ACD for the first time on or after Oct. 1, 2021, are considered new. Beneficiaries also are considered new if they paused or discontinued ABA services for more than 365 days. All new beneficiaries are assigned an ASN.

- If you were assigned an ASN and subsequently move, you remain eligible for an ASN as long as you continue to meet eligibility requirements. Refer to our **Autism Care Demonstration: Moving** page to learn more about moving and the ACD.
- If you were assigned an ASN but declined the support, you will no longer be eligible for the ACD.

HNFS assigns an ASN within three days after a beneficiary completes the ACD enrollment process. Learn more about ASNs in **(Section 8) Care Coordination and the Autism Care Demonstration: Autism Services Navigators**.

(Section 5.0)
Applied Behavior Analysis Provider Types

Throughout the course of your child's ABA treatment, they may receive services from one or more of the following ABA provider types. **Note:** HNFS' **Autism Care Demonstration Provider Directory** can be used to find providers who can diagnose ASD and who can treat beneficiaries diagnosed with ASD.

Applied Behavior Analysis Supervisors

TRICARE-Authorized Provider Types

- Board Certified Behavior Analyst® (BCBA®)
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst – Doctoral® (BCBA-D®)
- Licensed behavior analyst (LBA)
- Clinical psychologist

Certification Requirements

TRICARE-authorized ABA supervisors must have:

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

Before they can render services, ABA supervisors in the West Region must be credentialed and approved by HNFS to ensure all provider requirements have been met.

Assistant Behavior Analysts

TRICARE-Authorized Provider Types

- Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst® (BCaBA®)
- Qualified Autism Service Practitioner – Supervisor (QASP-S®)
- Licensed assistant behavior analyst (LABA)

Certification Requirements

TRICARE-authorized assistant behavior analysts must have:

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

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.

Behavior Technicians

TRICARE-Authorized Provider Types

- Registered Behavior Technician® (RBT®)
- Applied Behavior Analysis Technician® (ABAT®)
- Board Certified Autism Technician (BCAT)
- State-certified behavior technician (BT) (where applicable)

Certification Requirements

TRICARE-authorized BTs must have a current certification from:

- BACB (RBTs),
- QABA (ABATs),
- Behavioral Intervention Certification Council® (BCATs), or
- State certification (where applicable) before applying for TRICARE-authorized provider status

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

Sole and Tiered Service Delivery Models

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 services 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
  - BTs

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

Applied Behavior Analysis 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 ACD.
- Supported by clear and complete session notes (medical documentation).
- Consistent with the treatment approved for your child.

Providers must comply with state and federal regulations and TRICARE requirements, policies, and guidelines. Providers who don't comply with these requirements or the requirements in their provider participation agreements are subject to penalties and/or more severe administrative actions as required by law and contract.

(Section 6.0)
Autism Care Demonstration Participation

As a reminder...

- TRICARE beneficiaries must meet specific qualifications to participate in the ACD. Learn more at **www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD**.
- **For active duty sponsors only:** To have a child participate in the ACD, the active duty sponsor must register the child in ECHO. Registration deadlines apply. Learn more at **www.tricare.mil/ECHO**.
- Beneficiaries who are eligible to have an ASN but decline to have an ASN are no longer eligible for the ACD.

TRICARE Plan Types

The ACD is available to eligible individuals regardless of qualifying TRICARE plan type.

- ADSMs and families*
  - TRICARE Prime
  - TRICARE Prime Remote (TPR)
  - TRICARE For Life (TFL)
  - TRICARE Young Adult (TYA)
  - TRICARE Select

*ECHO enrollment is required for family members of ADSMs.

- Retired service members and families
  - TRICARE Prime
  - TFL
  - TYA
  - TRICARE Select
- Reserve members and families
  - TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS)
  - TRICARE Retired Reserve (TRR)

Before Getting Care Under the Autism Care Demonstration (Pre-Enrollment Support)

Before getting care:

- 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 called a nomination for ACD services. This will start the process for ACD enrollment.

Autism Services Coordinators

Once HNFS has started the pre-enrollment process, our Autism Services Coordinators (non-clinical coordinators with ACD and ASD experience) will support you with completing all ACD enrollment criteria.

> ***Take note!***
> **An Autism Services Coordinator differs from the ASN discussed in (Section 4.0) Benefits Under the Autism Care Demonstration. An ASN will not be assigned until an eligible beneficiary has met all ACD enrollment criteria.**

Autism Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis

ASD diagnosis occurs under the TRICARE basic benefit. The diagnosis must be from a TRICARE-authorized primary care manager (PCM) or specialized ASD-diagnosing and referring provider.

PCMs

- 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 psychiatry
- Doctoral-level clinical psychologists
- Specific board-certified doctors of nursing practice (DNP)

> ***Take note!***
> **Adult beneficiaries who are no longer within the age range of pediatric ASD diagnosing and referring providers must be diagnosed by a doctoral-level clinical psychologist or non-pediatric DNP.**

Request for Autism Care Demonstration Services

The ASD-diagnosing and referring provider must submit a request to HNFS. We will verify the request includes the following required items:

- **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 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) *Diagnostic Checklist (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*.)
- **Results from one of the following validated assessment tools (VAT):**
  - 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) (**Note:** Also requires submission of diagnostic evaluation with documentation of diagnosing methods used to supplement the GARS-3 parent questionnaire. If needed, one of HNFS' Autism Services Coordinators can help guide you through this requirement.)

> ***Take note!***
> **If your child has not yet completed an approved VAT, 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 VAT is completed.**

- **For family members of ADSMs only, registration in ECHO**. One of HNFS' Autism Services Coordinators can assist you with the provisional ECHO registration process if you are not already registered. 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. Please note:
  - If you do not submit proof of EFMP enrollment (or a waiver, when eligible) within the 90 days, your child will not be registered in 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 ECHO registration has not been completed after 180 days, your child will no longer be eligible for the ACD.
  - Once ECHO registration is complete and ABA treatment has been authorized, the beneficiary's eligibility for the ACD will be reinstated. HNFS will not backdate the authorization to cover the dates of service between the expiration of the provisional ECHO status and registration. No services under the ACD can be rendered during this period.

Once HNFS has verified all diagnostic criteria have been met, your child will officially be enrolled into the ACD.

> ***Take note!***
> **If you are not able to complete all enrollment criteria within the 180 days of support from the Autism Services Coordinator, we will close your ACD enrollment. You can reenter the enrollment process at any time and receive an additional 180 days of support.**

(Section 7.0) 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.

Step 1: Getting Referred for Applied Behavior Analysis Services

If we have already received a referral for ABA services during the 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.

Providers Who Can Issue Applied Behavior Analysis Services Referrals

The following TRICARE-authorized provider types may issue ABA services referrals:

PCMs

- 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 psychiatry
- Doctoral-level clinical psychologists
- Specific board-certified DNPs

> ***Take note!***
> **As a reminder, adult beneficiaries who are no longer within the age range of pediatric ASD diagnosing and referring providers must be referred by a doctoral-level clinical psychologist or non-pediatric DNP.**

Time Frame for HNFS to Process Referrals

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

- ASD diagnosis (and any comorbid diagnoses)
- Symptom severity (mild, moderate, severe)
- Statement the beneficiary needs ABA services

If the beneficiary'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 ABA services referral under TRICARE's ACD, we will need a copy (if we do not already have one on file) of the TRICARE-authorized diagnosing provider's diagnostic evaluation with definitive diagnosis of ASD.

Length of Referral

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 provided in six-month authorized treatment periods.

The first six-month authorized treatment period will start after the initial assessment.

Key Things to Remember

- The two-year referral cycle is calculated every two chronological years from the date HNFS received a verified referral.
- 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. **Note:** Referrals and updated checklists can be accepted up to six months before the current two-year referral ends.
- If you want to…
  - Change providers,
  - Get a second opinion,
  - Move within the West Region, or
  - Move to the East Region or overseas, then…

  …the referral will be valid if it is still within the two-year time frame.
- HNFS will provide the referral due date to you in writing so you can be aware of the due date and request a new referral when needed.

Assigning Applied Behavior Analysis Providers

Once enrollment criteria have been met, 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 complete the active provider placement process. We'll notify you once we've started.

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

Take note!

Access-to-care standards do not include parent/caregiver (or referring provider) preferences concerning location of services (center/clinic vs. home), time or day of week (morning, afternoon, evening, weekends) or specific providers or provider attributes.

Step 2: Completing the Initial Assessment

Once the two-year referral is authorized, your assigned ABA provider has 45 days to complete the initial assessment. However, they are required to schedule the first visit with your child to begin the assessment within 28 days from when HNFS first verified the referral.

To determine whether access-to-care standards were met, we will contact you or your child's provider to ask if there were any delays in starting the assessment.

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**.

- 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 the provider directly to schedule your appointment.

Take note!

HNFS approval letters sent to the ABA provider will contain the phone number you have on record in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). If your phone number is not current in DEERS, you may need to reach out to the ABA provider to schedule the assessment.

Did you know?

You can update your information in DEERS online at: **www.milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect**.

Initial 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:

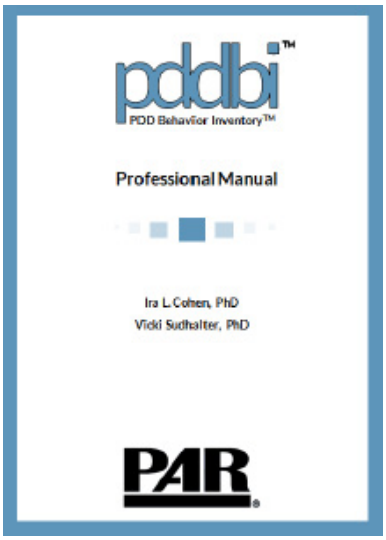
- The ABA provider's **direct observation** of your child
- Your child's **background information**, such as:
  - Diagnoses,
  - Family history,
  - How long your child has been receiving ABA services, etc.
- **Functional behavior assessment** of your child
- **Results from your parent/caregiver interview and report rating scales**
- **Development of a treatment plan** that meets all TRICARE requirements (this will include a current IEP for children receiving ABA services within a public or private school setting)
- **Pervasive Developmental Disorder Behavior Inventory (PDDBI) Parent Form results**

Second Opinion – 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 if the second opinion is within the two-year time frame.)
- 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 ACD, TRICARE requires the following outcome measure assessments for beneficiaries:

- PDDBI – Ages 2 years to 18.5 years (can accept as early as 1.5 years)
- Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Third Edition (Vineland-3) – Ages 0 years to 90 years
- Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Edition (SRS-2) – Ages 2.5 years to 99 years

TRICARE also requires an additional age-based outcome measure – either the Parenting Stress Index, Fourth Edition Short Form (PSI-4-SF) or the Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents (SIPA) – that evaluates parent/caregiver stress.[1] This is not used for developing treatment plans or evaluating patient improvements.

- PSI-4-SF – Ages 0 years to 12 years and 11 months
- SIPA – Ages 11 years to 19 years and 11 months

> ***Take note!***
> **The PSI-4-SF and SIPA have overlapping age ranges. At the time of authorization/reauthorization:**
> - **For beneficiaries aged 11 years through 12 years and 11 months, either the PSI-4-SF or SIPA will be accepted.**
> - **For beneficiaries older than 12 years and 11 months, the SIPA will be accepted.**

Providers Who Can Perform Outcome Measures

The PDDBI must be executed by the responsible ABA supervisor conducting the assessment or reassessment. HNFS may authorize the additional outcome measures to providers in our preferred outcome measure network. These providers have been identified as being capable of performing outcome measures (Vineland-3, SRS-2, PSI-4-SF, SIPA) for any beneficiary within access-to-care standards.

> ***Take note!***
> **It is important you accurately respond to outcome measure questions and seek clarification when you are not sure how to respond.**

- For the Vineland-3, SRS-2, PSI-4-SF, and SIPA, your child may be authorized to a provider who is not the ABA treating provider.
- HNFS may authorize outcome measures directly to ABA providers without a referral from your child's PCM or ASD-diagnosing provider.
- Outcome measure authorizations are separate from initial assessment and treatment authorizations.
- The outcome measures are reports based on answering questions in a survey format. Your child does not need to be present or participate in the completion of outcome measures.
- HNFS' preferred outcome measure network of providers may complete these with you indirectly (via email or postal mail) from any location in the West Region.

> ***Take note!***
> **We must receive scores for all applicable outcome measures before we can authorize ABA services.**

[1] Research has shown that parents' stress levels can impact their child and their child's environment, which in turn may affect their child's 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

Frequency

Please review the following table detailing when outcome measures are required.

Note: Baseline outcome measure scores are required and must be completed before HNFS first authorizes treatment. Once HNFS receives baseline outcome measures, these will be measured on a six-month or yearly basis from the date the baseline scores were received.

Required Outcome Measure Assessments

Outcome Measure	Baseline	Every 6 Months	Every Year
PDDBI Parent Form	Yes	Yes	N/A
PDDBI Teacher Form (Completed by ABA supervisor)	No	Yes	N/A
Vineland-3	Yes	N/A	Yes
SRS-2	Yes	N/A	Yes

Required Age-Based Outcome Measure

Outcome Measure	Baseline	Every 6 Months	Every Year
PSI-4-SF	Yes	Yes	N/A
SIPA	Yes	Yes	N/A

Step 3: Getting Authorized for Applied Behavior Analysis 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/caregiver goals and engagement
- PDDBI Parent Form scores
- Outcome measures (required before HNFS can authorize treatment)
- IEP, when applicable

The clinical necessity review process will begin at this point.

Take note!
ABA providers may not render any services until HNFS completes a benefit review for coverage.

The Role of Clinical Necessity Reviews

HNFS is required to perform clinical necessity reviews on all treatment plans before authorizing treatment. Clinical necessity reviewers determine what your child needs based on your child's treatment history and how well your child is responding to current treatment. We have qualified clinical reviewers on staff, such as BCBAs and BCBA-Ds, who will complete the clinical necessity 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 Review Steps

- 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 will ask the ABA provider to submit an updated treatment plan.
- Clinical necessity 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 your ABA provider about the additional information needed for the authorization process to continue.

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 core ASD symptoms.
- Not be an excluded service under the 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).

Setting	Details
Home	**The home is the beneficiary's residence.** • Services may be provided by all ABA provider types (as authorized per the treatment plan). • ABA providers must render active delivery of ABA services that target core ASD symptoms. • Refer to "School" in this section for home-schooling information.
Centers/Clinics	**A center (clinic) is the outpatient ABA center or clinic.** • Services may be provided by all ABA provider types (as authorized per the treatment plan). • ABA providers must render active delivery of ABA services that target core ASD symptoms. • Travel to and from a center/clinic is not reimbursable.

Setting	Details
School	**A school is defined as a preschool, public school, or private school or home-school.** • Services only may be provided by ABA supervisors (as authorized per the treatment plan) and all criteria must be met. • ABA supervisors must render active delivery of ABA services that target core ASD symptoms. • Services must be focused and time-limited. • ABA services performed by BTs or assistant behavior analysts in a school setting are not allowed. • ABA supervisors may not function as support aides or observers during school routines or activities (lunch, group activities, arts and crafts, etc.). • Current IEP is required. ABA services may not duplicate IEP services or goals. • Academic or educational goals are not covered under the ACD in any setting, including the school setting. • For home-schooling, authorized ABA services must be rendered outside of home-schooling instruction. Home-schooling instruction cannot overlap ABA services. • Daycare centers/child development centers/after-school programs are not considered school settings under the ACD. Refer to "Daycare" in this section.
Daycare (Non-Preschool)	**A daycare is a daycare center, child development center or after-school program.** • Services may be provided by all ABA provider types (as authorized per the treatment plan). • ABA providers must render active delivery of ABA services that target core ASD symptoms. • ABA providers may not function as support aides or observers during daycare routines or activities (lunch, group activities, arts and crafts, etc.).
Community	**Community settings are any location not part of a home, center/clinic or school setting.** Community settings include grocery stores, parks, restaurants, medical offices, and events such as youth sports or local community events. • Services may be provided by all ABA provider types (as authorized per the treatment plan). • ABA providers must render active delivery of ABA services that target core ASD symptoms. • Services must be focused and time-limited. • Specific exclusions apply to sporting events and camps. • Exclusions also apply to ABA services rendered during 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, provider types, and goal/unit recommendations are clinically appropriate. • Parent/caregiver training cannot be performed in a community setting and must be conducted in a clinic or home setting or by telemedicine (when authorized).
Telemedicine	**Telemedicine involves 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 telemedicine when authorized: – Parent/caregiver guidance by ABA supervisors or assistant behavior analysts – Medical conferences by ABA supervisors • ABA supervisors or assistant behavior analysts must render active delivery of ABA services that target core ASD symptoms. • BTs may not provide services via telemedicine. • Outcome measures are not allowed via telemedicine but may be rendered via indirect methods. Refer to "Indirect" in this section.
Indirect	**Indirect refers to 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 Applied Behavior Analysis Services

We've completed our clinical necessity review, and you've received confirmation that your request for 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 initial assessment.
- ABA providers must render the first parent/caregiver training session within 30 days of each 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 for ABA providers who fail to meet this requirement.)

> ***Take note!***
> **There are exceptions to the penalty if a beneficiary is not available for treatment during 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-to-care standards, you must notify us so we can document the waiver.

Parent/Caregiver Training

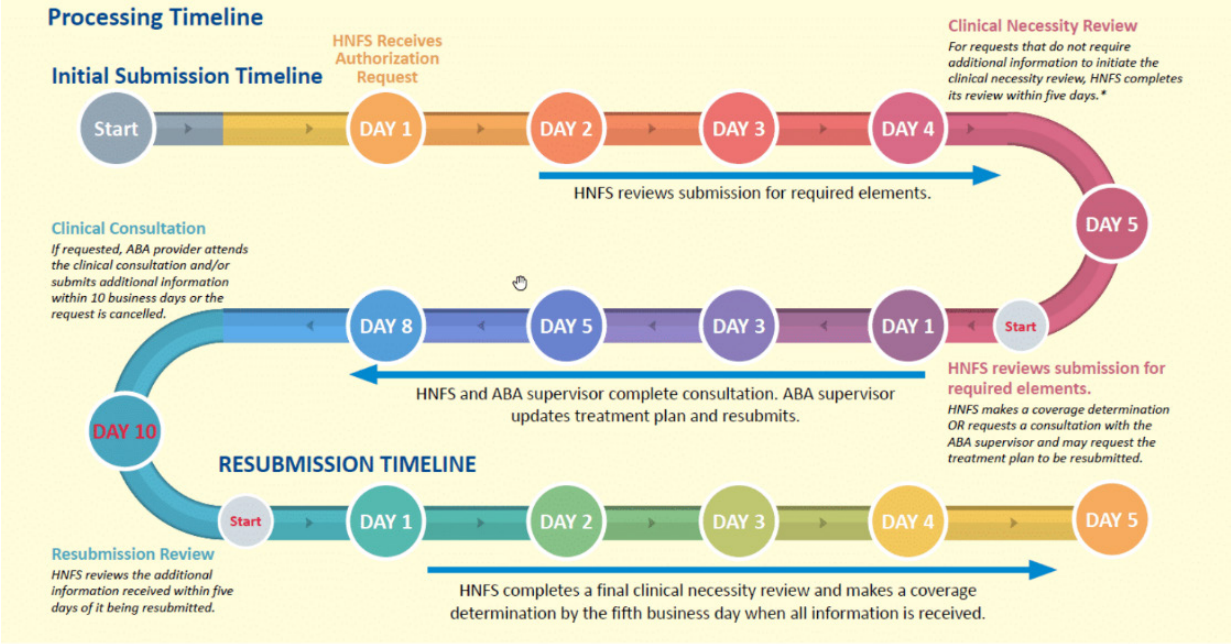
An important component of a strong, clinical ABA program includes training parents/caregivers on ABA principles and how to work effectively with the beneficiary to achieve measurable goals and target specific skills.

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

Changing Applied Behavior Analysis 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 may work with that group directly to request a change in ABA supervisors, assistant behavior analysts and/or BTs. You will not need a second opinion authorization.
- If we authorized services to a sole ABA 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.



To prevent possible gaps in care, ABA providers are responsible for responding in a timely manner to requests for consultation and/or additional information. 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 authorized treatment period, the provider must submit a new request to HNFS before the existing authorization expires.

Take note!
Your ABA provider can submit a reauthorization request up to 60 days before the end of the current authorized treatment period.

We will review all subsequent treatment requests the same way we did the first treatment authorization. This will include verifying:

- TRICARE eligibility
- ACD eligibility
- Updated treatment plan that documents beneficiary progress
- PDDBI Parent and Teacher Form scores (**Note:** Only an ABA supervisor may complete a PDDBI Teacher Form.)
- Outcome measures
- An IEP, when applicable
- Current two-year referral
- A current comprehensive care plan (CCP) when an ASN has been assigned

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

- Progress toward improved symptom presentation
- Parent/caregiver 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.
- **Important:** If the two-year referral will expire before the start of the next six-month authorized treatment 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. The discharge plan will be unique to your child, and the ABA provider will update it as needed based on your child's response to treatment. Providers use discharge plans to help families successfully transition to a parent/caregiver training model. When it is determined that your child is ready to leave the ACD or be discharged from care, and/or, you wish to explore treatment with a different ABA provider, your ABA provider will submit the discharge plan to us.

- ABA providers are directed to give a minimum 45-day notice to both HNFS and parents/caregivers 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 is authorized to provide treatment at a time.

(Section 8.0)
Care Coordination and the Autism Care Demonstration: Autism Services Navigators

On Oct. 1, 2021, TRICARE introduced the ASN role to the ACD.

Autism Services Navigators

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

Role Responsibilities

The ASN's role is to support the beneficiary and their family as a health care advocate, helping them navigate the ACD and maximize the services available. Responsibilities of an ASN include:

- Working with families to develop and maintain CCPs.
- Coordinating medical and mental health care services with the beneficiary's providers.
- Coordinating and participating in medical team conference meetings.
- Helping beneficiaries who are new to the West Region with medical appointments.
- Coordinating care for those currently receiving care under the ACD who are moving to a different TRICARE region (East, West, overseas) or within their current TRICARE region.
- Helping connect families with local resources and supports.
- Helping your child maximize progress through the ACD!

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

Time Frame for Assignment

HNFS assigns an ASN within three days after a beneficiary completes the ACD enrollment process.

Beneficiary Eligibility for an Autism Services Navigator

All beneficiaries who have entered the ACD for the first time on or after Oct. 1, 2021, are considered new. Beneficiaries also are considered new if they paused or discontinued ABA services for more than 365 days.

- If you were assigned an ASN and subsequently move to another TRICARE region (East, West, overseas), you can still have an ASN as long as you continue to meet ACD eligibility requirements.
- If you were assigned an ASN but decline the support, you will no longer be eligible for the ACD.

Options if Not Eligible for an Autism Services Navigator

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 EFMP.

HNFS' case management team offers support to help you coordinate care and services for your child. To get started, visit our **Care Management Programs** page. You also can connect with our case management team by calling our dedicated case/care management line at **1-844-524-3578**.

Comprehensive Care Plans

Your ASN will develop and maintain a CCP that serves as a guide for you and your child's providers ***that is specific to your child***.

A CCP is a vital tool used for:

- Ensuring all ACD and TRICARE program requirements are met.
- Processing ACD referrals and authorizations.
- Learning how to incorporate behavior lessons at home to maintain consistency with your child's care.
- Using the PSI-4-SF/SIPA to monitor any stress you as a parent/caregiver might be experiencing.
- Identifying TRICARE benefits that could assist your child.
- Identifying resources outside of the TRICARE benefit that could assist your child.
- Planning your child's short-and long-term care.
- Ensuring outcome measure cycle dates are met.
- Monitoring ECHO and EFMP temporary relief for primary caregivers (when applicable).
- Setting up medical team conferences (when applicable).
- Identifying any other conditions that might physically or mentally affect your child.
- Planning/preparing for the time that your child is ready to leave the ACD.

Developing and/or Updating Comprehensive Care Plans

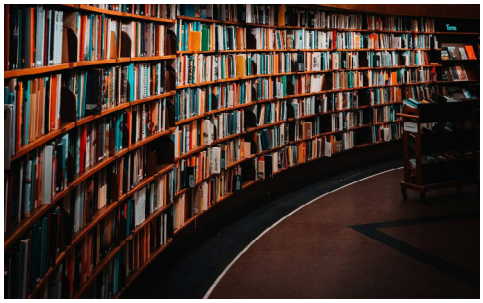
After you first meet with your ASN, the ASN will develop the initial CCP. Per TRICARE requirements, HNFS must receive a completed initial CCP within the first 90 days of you entering the ACD. After that, your ASN will update the CCP every six months.

CCPs are separate from and do not replace the treatment plans developed by ABA providers. Together, the CCP and treatment plan help ensure your child receives appropriate services and support.

Please work with your ASN to complete your child's CCP and avoid delays or gaps in care.

> ***Take note!***
> **If the CCP cannot be completed 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 not be able to continue to authorize ABA services.**

(Section 9.0)
Additional Autism Care Demonstration Resources and Contact Information



General Resources

www.tricare.mil

Review benefits and an overview of the TRICARE program.

health.mil/autism

Sign up for ACD-related email alerts.

https://public.govdelivery.com

Sign up for additional Military Health System email updates.

West Region-Specific Resources

www.tricare-west.com/go/ACD

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

familysupport.hnfs.com

Specially designed for HNFS in support of West Region beneficiaries and their families, **familysupport.hnfs.com** offers 24/7 access to an online directory of community resources, including:

- ASD-specific local resources
- Military-specific social support resources in and around military installations throughout the West Region
- Information on connecting with free or low-cost support services

Note: When accessing **familysupport.hnfs.com**, simply enter your ZIP code, language preference and keywords (such as "autism support group" or "autism resources") and click the magnifying glass icon to connect with services available in your community. You can even filter the site according to preferences that work best for your family, such as in-person appointments vs. virtual appointments and hours of operation (open late, early, weekends).

Additional External Resources and Contact Information

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

https://autismspeaks.org

National Autism Center at May Institute

https://nationalautismcenter.org/

Autism Society

https://autismsociety.org/

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/index.html

Contacting HNFS

As a reminder, you can reach HNFS' ACD customer service team by:

- Calling **1-844-866-WEST (9378)**, follow the prompts (Monday through Friday, 5 a.m.-9 p.m. PT), or
- Emailing us at **CS_ABA@hnfs.com**.

Appointments and Contacts Sheets

Refer to **(Appendix A) Appointments and Contacts** to print out sheets for keeping track of your child's ACD appointments and care team contact information.

(Section 10.0)
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation or Acronym	Definition
ABA	Applied behavior analysis
ABAT®	Applied Behavior Analysis Technician®
ABS	Adaptive behavior services
ACD	Autism Care Demonstration
ACSP	Autism Corporate Services Provider
ADFM	Active duty family member
ADHD	Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
ADI®-R	Autism Diagnostic Interview – Revised
ADL	Activity of daily living
ADOS®-2	Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule™, Second Edition
ADSM	Active duty service member
AMA	American Medical Association
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
ASN	Autism Services Navigator
BACB®	Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Inc.®
BCaBA®	Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst®
BCAT	Board Certified Autism Technician
BCBA®	Board Certified Behavior Analyst®
BCBA-D®	Board Certified Behavior Analyst – Doctoral®
BICC	Behavioral Intervention Certification Council
BLS	Basic life support
BT	Behavior technician
CARS™-2	Childhood Autism Rating Scale™, Second Edition
CCP	Comprehensive care plan
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CHBC	Criminal history background check
CMS	Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
CPR	Cardiopulmonary resuscitation
CPT® code	Current Procedural Terminology code
DBN	Department of Defense Benefits Number
DEERS	Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System
DHA	Defense Health Agency
DNP	Doctor of nursing practice
DOD	Department of Defense
DSM-5	*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition
ECHO	Extended Care Health Option
EDI	Electronic data interchange

Abbreviation or Acronym	Definition
EFMP	Exceptional Family Member Program
EFT	Electronic funds transfer
GARS-3	Gilliam Autism Rating Scale, Third Edition
HIPAA	*Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act*
HNFS	Health Net Federal Services, LLC
IEP	Individualized Education Program
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
LABA	Licensed assistant behavior analyst
LBA	Licensed behavior analyst
MUE	Medically unlikely edit
NPI	National Provider Identifier
NPPES	National Plan & Provider Enumeration System
OHI	Other health insurance
OT	Occupational therapy
PCM	Primary care manager
PDDBI	Pervasive Developmental Disorder Behavior Inventory
PEAK	Promoting Emergence of Advanced Knowledge
PSI-4-SF	Parenting Stress Index, Fourth Edition Short Form
PT	Physical therapy
QABA®	Qualified Applied Behavior Analysis Credentialing Board
QASP-S®	Qualified Autism Service Practitioner – Supervisor
QHP	Qualified health professional
RBT®	Registered Behavior Technician®
SDC	Special Day Class
SIPA	Stress Index for Parents of Adolescents
SRS-2	Social Responsiveness Scale, Second Edition
SSN	Social Security number
ST	Speech therapy
STAT™	Screening Tool for Autism in Toddlers and Young Children
TIN	Tax Identification Number
TOM	TRICARE Operations Manual
TPM	TRICARE Policy Manual
TRM	TRICARE Reimbursement Manual
VAT	Validated assessment tool
Vineland-3	Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, Third Edition

Thank You

Health Net Federal Services is committed to the health and well-being of our uniformed services members and their families. Through the TRICARE program and demonstrations such as the Autism Care Demonstration we proudly partner with the Department of Defense to improve the lives of those who defend and define our great nation. Thank you for your family's service.

(Appendix A)
Appointments and Contacts

The next two pages can be printed out and used to keep track of your child's ACD appointments and care team contact information.

Autism Care Demonstration Appointments

Appointment (Date/Time/Details)	Appointment (Date/Time/Details)

Autism Care Demonstration Team Contacts

Provider	Contact Information
Autism Services Navigator	
Autism Services Coordinator	
Autism Spectrum Disorder-Diagnosing Provider	
Autism Spectrum Disorder-Referring Provider	
Primary Care Manager	
Applied Behavior Analysis Provider 1	
Applied Behavior Analysis Provider 2	
Applied Behavior Analysis Provider 3	
Other Contact	
Other Contact	
Other Contact	
Other Contact	
Other Contact	
Other Contact	
Other Contact	