



## Provider communication

*General information and system updates*

**August 22, 2024**

### **ABA Co-Treatment, Code Definition and Modifier Use**

**Applicable to: Mercy Care Advantage, Mercy Care ACC RBHA, Mercy Care Long Term Care, Mercy Care DD, and Mercy Care DCS CHP**

Friendly Reminder:

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is an evidence-based practice that focuses on the analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation of social and other environmental modifications to produce meaningful changes in human behavior. ABA includes the use of direct observation, measurement, and functional analysis of the relations between environment and behavior.

Mercy Care is aware ABA providers frequently treat symptoms and concerns (i.e., communication, social delays) that are concurrently being addressed by other healthcare professionals. Please note, ABA services are not intended to overlap or replace other AHCCCS covered services, including Occupational, Physical and Speech Therapy. Mercy Care recognizes treatment goals are more likely to be achieved when there is a shared understanding and coordination of care among all treating healthcare professionals, but the need for coordination and concurrent treatment should be individualized to the member's needs, with clinical justification and medical necessity outlined in the treatment plan. The purpose of treatment is to maximize member outcomes, not replace or overlap services consistently as this could be ineffective in treating the members with special healthcare needs.

Family adaptive behavior treatment guidance (97156)

In addition, Mercy Care wanted to give a friendly reminder of the use of 97156 in the ABA service delivery model. Family adaptive behavior treatment guidance (97156) is focused on guidance administered by a physician or other qualified health care professional offering strategies, support and training to the member's family and caregivers on the implementation and generalization of skills in the home or community settings. These sessions may cover a range of topics, including behavior management techniques, strategies for promoting skill acquisition, and how to create supportive environments that facilitate the patient's progress.

Mercy Care supports the use of the ABA tiered model with the following modifiers for 97156.

- **HN** - Master, Trainee, Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA)
- **HO** - Licensed Behavior Analyst (LBA)
- **HP** - Board Certified Behavior Analyst – Doctoral (BCBA-D)
- Modifier 53

Mercy Care follows the AHCCCS Medical Policy Manual Section 320: Services with Special Circumstances policy. Providers are required to utilize national coding standards including the use of applicable modifier(s). Providers should refer to the AHCCCS Medical Coding Resources web page for updated information about valid modifiers, place of service codes, category of service and appropriate provider types, to include the use of modifier 53 and appropriate billing requirements for CPT code 97156. Modifier 53 is used when the treatment is discontinued. When using modifier 53, providers should include supporting documentation that explains why the procedure was discontinued.

Mercy Care requires providers to adhere to state-specific regulations including AHCCCS Medical Policy Manual, Section 320-S Behavior Analysis Services, Arizona state behavior analyst licensure laws and regulations (A.R.S. §32-2091), in alignment with the Arizona Board of Psychologist Examiners as well as ABA professional standards and best practices as set forth by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), in collaboration with the Council of Autism Service Providers (CASP), when delivering ABA services to Mercy Care members that fall under the ethical code and scope of practice.

Please don't hesitate to contact your [Mercy Care Network Management Representative](#) or your [Mercy Care Provider Educator](#) with any questions or comments. You can find this [Notice](#) and all other provider notices on our [Mercy Care website](#).

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