

Additional autism interventions now payable via telemedicine on an ongoing basis and restrictions are removed from protocol modification (*97155)

As previously communicated, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network began allowing some services for autism spectrum disorder to be payable when delivered via telemedicine as a temporary measure during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective Nov. 1, 2021, we're updating our *Autism Spectrum Disorder Services medical policy* to allow those services to be payable via telemedicine on an ongoing basis. We're also removing restrictions on protocol modification (*97155).

These changes apply to members whose coverage includes an autism benefit.

Note: To determine which procedures can be performed via telehealth for Medicare Plus BlueSM members who have an autism benefit, see the *Medicare-covered telehealth services for the COVID-19 PHE* document.

Services that are payable via telemedicine on an ongoing basis, effective Nov. 1

Per the updated medical policy, we'll allow the following autism services to be delivered via synchronous (real time) telemedicine on an ongoing (no longer temporary) basis:

- Assessment, *97151
- Applied behavior analysis, or ABA, *97153

Note: This service is allowed via telehealth for children who meet appropriateness criteria. The *Guidelines for autism interventions delivered via telemedicine* document offers guidance in determining which members can benefit from direct-line ABA interventions delivered via telemedicine.

- Skills training, *97154
- Intensive skills training, *97158

Restrictions lifted on protocol modification

Per the updated medical policy, protocol modification, *97155, will be allowed via real-time telemedicine visits 100% of the time. (Previously, this service was allowed to be delivered via telemedicine only 50% of the time.)

Note: During the COVID-19 pandemic for dates of service from April 14, 2020, through Oct. 31, 2021, we allowed licensed behavior analysts, or LBAs, to troubleshoot treatment protocols directly with the parent/caregiver functioning as the behavioral technician. With the Nov. 1, 2021, update to the *Autism Spectrum Disorder medical policy*, this temporary measure is no longer payable.

Reminder

The following services continue to be payable when delivered via real-time telemedicine: caregiver training (*97156), multi-family caregiver training (*97157), supervision (S5108) and caregiver training (S5111).

Note: S5108 and S5111 are payable only to Michigan providers who deliver services to out-of-state members and cannot use the American Medical Association category 1 codes.

Updated documents

By Nov. 1, we'll update the following documents to reflect this change:

- *Telehealth for behavioral health providers*
- *Temporary changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic*

You can find these documents on our public website at bcbsm.com/coronavirus or within Provider Secured Services.

You can view the updated *Telemedicine Services medical policy* through the BCN Medical Policy Manual. To do this:

1. Log in as a provider at bcbsm.com/providers.
2. Click the *BCN Provider Publications and Resources* link on the right.
3. Click *Medical Policy Manual* on the left, under "Other Resources."
4. Click *Policies by name* on the right.
5. Click *A*, scroll to *Autism Spectrum Disorder Services* and click the link.

Soon, the updated policy will also be available through our *Medical Policy & Pre-Cert/Pre-Auth Router* on **bcbsm.com**.

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