



Coverage for Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Autism spectrum disorder is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges. Learning, thinking, and problem-solving abilities of people can range from gifted to severely challenged. Some people need a lot of help in their daily lives; others need less.
- One in 68 children is now diagnosed this has more than doubled since 2000.
- There is no cure although studies have shown some children improve with early diagnosis and intervention.

City of Austin's Medical Plan Services for Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Plan covered services:
 - Diagnostic evaluation
 - Neuropsychological testing
 - Family therapy
 - Medications and medication management
 - Speech, physical and occupational therapy

Applied Behavior Analysis

- **Applied natural science devoted to developing and applying procedures for effective and beneficial behavior change.**
 - Coverage typically includes one-on-one sessions by paraprofessionals, between 5-40 hours per week.
- **The City of Austin has reviewed Applied Behavior Analysis on an annual basis since 2011.**
 - Costs vary by individual depending on population, demographics and number of children.
 - In 2014, 26 members were diagnosed with Autism.
 - TowersWatson estimates the cost to the City could range from \$668,000 to \$996,000
 - Carriers report that ~5% of self-insured employers offer coverage for Applied Behavior Analysis.

Current Benchmark Data - Applied Behavior Analysis

City of Austin	AISD	Travis County	City of San Antonio	City of Houston	State of Texas (ERS)
Does Not Cover	Covers	Only Covered On Exception Basis	Does Not Cover	Does Not Cover	Does Not Cover

Compliance

- **Self-insured plans, which includes the City of Austin, are not required to cover Applied Behavior Analysis.**
 - However, if Applied Behavior Analysis is included in an employer sponsored plan the plan must follow the Mental Health Parity Act.
 - Plans cannot impose dollar or visit limits.

Next Steps

- **Review benchmark data and plan designs**
- **Evaluate proposed changes during the budget process**