



Sustain Provider Reimbursement Rate: Protect Access to Medically Necessary Care

Why This Matters

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy is a medically necessary, evidence-based treatment—and the only empirically validated intervention—for children and youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ABA is delivered by highly trained, credentialed medical professionals, and availability depends on adequate state-approved provider reimbursement. When reimbursement rates fail to reflect the true cost of care, providers cannot sustain operations, retain a qualified workforce, or meet growing demand—directly limiting access to quality services for Michigan families. Continued investment in the MDHHS budget specifically for the reimbursement rate is therefore essential to maintain workforce stability, prevent service disruptions, and ensure timely access to effective care statewide.

MDHHS policy is not being implemented as intended or communicated by the Department or the legislature (FY24 Budget). Per the MDHHS letter dated March 28, 2025 (L 24-59), the Direct Care Worker (DCW) wage increase for therapy code 97153 was required to be paid separately from the \$66.00/hour minimum rate. This is leaving providers to absorb the cost and creating additional, unsustainable financial strain.

What You Need to Know

- When provider reimbursement rates are not maintained at \$66/hour, Michiganders suffer. Children and families do not have access to medically necessary treatments.
- Administrative requirements and workforce costs have increased, and ABA-related service rates have not kept pace—some remaining below 2012 reimbursement levels.
- Reimbursement rates do not cover the cost of quality ABA care. Providing services that meet clinical standards—including adequate supervision, staff training, and clinical oversight—costs more than current reimbursement rates.
- Michigan providers are leaving the state. Financial strain is forcing ABA providers to leave Michigan or stop serving Michiganders, reducing access to care for families—especially in rural and underserved areas.
- The \$66.00/hour minimum is essential. To maintain access to safe, effective, and ethical ABA therapy statewide, providers require contracted rates of at least \$66.00 per hour for CPT Code 97153—direct ABA therapy.
- The Direct Care Worker (DCW) wage increase for therapy code 97153 is a pass through wage increase intended for ABA therapists. When included in the \$66.00/hour minimum rate, as indicated in the MDHHS Letter dated March 28, 2025 (L 24-59), it reduces the increase appropriated as part of the FY24 budget



Sustain Provider Reimbursement Rate: Protect Access to Medically Necessary Care

from \$66/hour to effectively \$62/hour. This increases the burden on ABA providers negatively impacting their ability to sustain a high quality provider network throughout the State.

- MDHHS published a letter dated February 17, 2026, that is contradictory to the March 28, 2025 (L 24-59) and contrary to legislative intent as evidenced in FY24 budget allocations.

Benefits to State of Michigan

Support for the Autism Program Budget, sustaining the \$66.00/hour minimum reimbursement rate, and enforcing the additional Direct Care Worker (DCW) Wage is critical to:

- Access to medically necessary ABA therapy for children and families
- Maintain a qualified workforce of licensed, educated, and credentialed ABA professionals to provide quality services
- Ensure Michigan complies with state and federal law—including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), and the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA)—while guaranteeing children and families receive medically necessary care
- Financial viability of ABA providers, preventing closures and keeping Michigan-based businesses operating
- Retain providers and prevent the loss of Michigan-based ABA organizations and jobs to states with higher reimbursement rates

Action Requested

Ensure that the reimbursement rate reflects a true \$66/hour as appropriated in FY24 budget.

This handout is intended to support informed decision-making and collaborative problem-solving around student access, inclusion, and medically necessary care in Michigan schools as recommended by the Michigan Behavior Analysis Providers Association (MiBAP). MiBAP can be reached at membership@mibap.org, 269.460.0517, or 208 N. Capitol Ave, Fl 3, Lansing, MI 48933.