

Rationale for ABA coverage via WFU Insurance

What is **ABA**?

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is a therapy for treating autism.

Autism is a medical (neurological) condition affecting ~1.5% of children nationwide.

Symptoms: vary widely -- [mild] social impairments to [severe] social/behavioral deficits

Autism is treatable, though no known cure

- *early intervention with intensive, evidence-based therapies including behavioral therapies* is considered best practice for treatment of autism

Am. Acad. of Pediatrics: “ameliorate/manage symptoms, improve functioning” -- endorses ABA

ABA

- most commonly prescribed treatment for autism
- evidence-based; decades of research support
- Uses behavioral health principles to increase positive adaptive behavior & reduce negative behaviors. Can teach new skills & how to generalize; highly structured
- Prescribed by a licensed physician or psychologist; therapists must be certified

Trend: medical insurance is now covering ABA

- 45 states (+DC) now require plans to cover ABA. (in 2006, 1 state did)
- NC [SB 676](#) (effective 7/1/16) requires ABA coverage, \$40,000/year limit. also removed caps on medically prescribed therapy (OT, ST, PT) for children under 18
- Self-funded plans are exempt from this state regulation
- WFU Reynolda currently offers **no** coverage for ABA, strict therapy limits

**REQUEST: Wake Forest (Reynolda) must meet SB 676,
MUST cover ABA at \$40,000/year limit**

Self-funded plans that cover ABA

- Duke (as of Jan 2017)
- WFU Baptist Health
- Tufts, Emory, Vanderbilt, UVA (self-funded), BU, BC, Brandeis
- Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, MIT, Cornell, Penn, NYU, Washington U
- [in NC] City of Winston-Salem, Novant, Hanesbrands, Volvo, Wells Fargo, B of A, Red Hat, ...

Why cover ABA?

1. **Short-term vs long-term costs.** ABA typically used at peak intensity for a couple years Without ABA children often use costly special ed programs & inpatient behavioral care. *Paying for ABA is significantly less expensive than long-term costs of non-treatment.*
2. **Employee recruitment, retention, well-being.** Employees obtain: (1) decreased absenteeism; (2) more productivity; (3) well-being gains
3. **Aligns with *Pro Humanitate* mission** of Wake Forest