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

Dr. Jason Parsley, (WFU), 13 March 2017