

MEMO

November, 2008

To: Providers trying to navigate the TRICARE bureaucracy

From: Michael O'Hanlon, an interested parent

The below is meant to provide some information that may be of use to providers trying to get used to TRICARE's reimbursement system for ABA services. It is not that hard, and providers who've gotten used to it say it resembles normal medical claims processing. But it can take a bit of adjustment.

This memo provides two main types of information. First, it provides some information about how to enroll in the new TRICARE demonstration project, by which up to \$36,000 a year in costs can be covered by the Department of Defense. Second, it includes some examples of semi-annual progress reports on individual children that providers have sent to TRICARE for reimbursement (under the traditional ECHO program). It should be noted that a behavior plan detailing the objectives and goals of the treatment plan is also required. The initial behavior plan must include, patient's name, date of birth, date of functional behavior assessment, sponsor SSN, name of referring provider, background of patient, goals and objectives, parental training plan, and summary / recommendations. The behavior plan must be submitted and updated every six months (as well as the progress reports) for authorization of continued services.

## **PART I: KEY PROCEDURES FOR THE TRICARE DEMO**

Providers tell me that there are a couple key steps in qualifying for reimbursement from the Department of Defense under its ABA Demonstration:

- First, of course, figure out which company handles TRICARE in your area.
- Second, consult the certification requirements for TRICARE (see the footnote below for information on the relevant manual). Among other things, tutors must have a 40-hour training program covering some key ABA matters, and must also have criminal background checks.
- Third, provide periodic electronic updates on each case, which actually may be simpler than the detailed plans shown below.

The second of these is the most complicated, so some additional information follows.

### TRICARE Demo Project New Provider Rules

Supervisors must meet one of the below designations:

- Have a state license to provide ABA services; or
- Have a state issued certificate as a provider of ABA services; or
- Be certified as a BCBA or BCABA.

TRICARE has eliminated the “Tutor in Training” category but everyone who would have qualified under that category before should still be qualified under the new criteria:

1. All Tutors must have completed a qualifying 40 hour classroom training program (CARD training does qualify, as one example) and passed the criminal background check.  

and
2. All Tutors must have completed ONE or more of the following:
  - a. 12 semester hours of college coursework and be enrolled in a course of study leading to a degree in psychology, education, social work, behavioral science, human development or related fields)
  - b. 48 semester hours of college coursework
  - c. High school diploma (or GED) and 500 hours of ABA fieldwork

#### Procedures for Registering Individual Tutors

The documentation required for each tutor is not complicated. One well-known provider uses an Excel spreadsheet with about 15 columns of information. Most are mundane—the name of the business and its tax identification number and contact information, as well as the name and the specialty of the individual in question (e.g., “ABA tutor”).

The key information, which requires entry just with a Y or N for yes or no, includes:

- Has the individual received 40 hours of appropriate classroom training?
- Has the individual met the educational requirement (noted above)
- Has the individual been receiving the requisite 2 hours per month of supervision while working with children?
- Has the employing organization established a criminal background history investigation process and employed it for this individual?
- Has the person passed muster with the criminal background investigation?

These are generally straightforward to answer. The most complicated is the first, designing a proper 40-hour initial training protocol for new tutors that complies with good professional practice in general and TRICARE’s regulations in particular. Established organizations will typically be well on the way to meeting this criterion based on their standard method of preparing new tutors, but they need to verify as much by comparing their training curriculum with what is outlined in TRICARE regulations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To find the most up-to-date requirements for the autism service demonstration, go to <http://manuals.tricare.osd.mil/>, choose TRICARE Operations Manual, then choose "Entire Manual at Change 68". Finally, go to Chapter 20, Section 10. Be aware that you may need a plug-in to view the documents. If so, at the very top of the "TRICARE Manuals" page is a section labeled, "NOTICE" that includes a link to the plug in as well as instructions for

**PART II: EXAMPLES OF SEMI-ANNUAL REPORTS (UNDER TRADITIONAL ECHO PROGRAM)**

EXAMPLE ONE

Name: Child  
Date of Birth:

Date of Report: October 21, 2004  
Authorization #: 0316409112104

Sponsor SSN:  
Referring Provider:  
Number of Supervisor Hours each Month:  
Number of Tutor Hours each Month:

ABA Progress Report

Receptive Language Skills

**Goal:** Child will receptively identify (by pointing, touching or giving) concepts given 9 out of 10 trials (90%).

**Objectives:** Child will identify:

Progress:	6/04	10/04
Upper and lower case letters of the alphabet, numbers 1-100, shapes, colors.	45%	80%
Body parts (show me where your ear is ), Categories	50%	75%
Object/ action discrimination	20%	35%
Feature, function, class of objects	0%	5%

**Assessment:** Observation and data collection

Expressive Language Skills

**Goal:** Child will expressively identify verbally, concepts given 9 out of 10 trials.

**Objectives:** Child will identify:

Progress:	6/04	10/04
Upper and lower case letter, numbers 1-100, shapes, colors	10%	30%
Body Parts (pointing to ear, ask “what is this”), Categories	25%	40%
Object/ Action discrimination	0%	10%
Common Features of objects	0%	0%

**Assessment:** Observation and data collection

Socialization/Communication

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installing it. For more information on BACB training standards, go to the Behavior Analyst Certification Board website at <http://www.bacb.com/> or the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA) site at <http://www.apbahome.net/>.

**Goal:** Child will use language to respond and interact with those in his environment with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities without prompts (80%).

**Objectives:** Child will:

Progress:	6/04	10/04
use complete sentences to request play activities, to obtain more of an item, or to initiate, continue or terminate an activity	0%	0%
gain the attention before requesting	0%	20%
use appropriate eye contact in greetings, play situations and conversations	10%	25%
use appropriate greetings and eye contact when entering and leaving the room	5%	15%

**Assessment:** Observation and Data Collection

**Goal:** Child will use socially appropriate language to respond and interact with those in his environment with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities without prompts.

**Objectives:** Child will:

Progress:	6/04	10/04
demonstrate understanding of common courtesy (spontaneously apologizing, saying please and thank you)	0%	5%
respond appropriately using an observation of a social situation (laugh when a joke is told)	0%	5%
take turns with conversation	0%	0%
respect property of others by asking permission for use	0%	0%
recognize the need for assistance and seek help	0%	10%
attempt to solve his own problems socially	0%	0%
stand up for his rights (it's not fair)	0%	5%

**Assessment:** Observation and Data Collection

**Goal:** Child will actively participate in activities with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities without prompts.

**Objectives:** Child will:

Progress:	6/04	10/04
Provide personal information (name, age, names of siblings, parent's names, etc.)	5%	25%
wait for his own turn during activities	0%	20%

**Assessment:** Observation and Data Collection Checklists

Child continues to make progress in all skill areas. Receptive language skills have improved dramatically, though still require extensive focus to increase his ability to identify objects in his surroundings. This goal must be met in order to work on expressive language skills, which in turn will allow Child to communicate with others. Child's expressive language skills are improving, though are still very unclear and require several verbal prompts in order to get a response that can be understood.

Child continues to have extreme difficulty with social skills. There has been some level of improvement with interaction between peers, though there is still an extreme deficit with interaction between siblings.

It is my recommendation as Child's program consultant, to continue the current Verbal Behavior program that he is currently working on. The continuation of this program is crucial in order for Child to participate in daily routines/activities.

EXAMPLE TWO

Name: Child  
 Date of Birth:  
 Evaluation period:  
 Sponsor SSN:  
 Referring provider:  
 Supervisor Hours each month:  
 Tutor Hours each month:

Date of Report: 8-20-2008

**ABA Progress Report**

**Receptive Language and Visual Perception Skills**

**Goal:** Child will increase visual perception and receptive language skills in the areas of reading and functional math on 3 consecutive cold probes.

**Objectives:** Child will increase identification of words and money in order to prepare him for functional life and job related skills:

Progress in tasks mastered:	2/08	8/08		
Receptive Commands- Follows command when given in written format. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mastered: Clap Hands, Touch Head, Stomp Feet, Raise Hand, Touch Feet</li> <li>▪ Working on: Put on shirt/pants/underwear, Wash hands</li> </ul>	3	5		
Receptive Sight Words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: Cookie, juice, balloon, milk, I, want, banana, computer, video, popcorn, hot dog, rice cakes, French fries, spaghetti, waffle, cereal, bus, cat, dog, ball, chip, yes, no, hamburger, frog, pig, duck, cow, apple, table, cup, shoes, bear, fish, train, car, bus, helicopter, monkey, bubbles, television, music, stir, put, need, push, touch, bear, open, in, cracker, swing, toilet, book, putty, book, out, movie, red, orange, green, purple, yellow, hairbrush, chair, sink, scissors, spoon, backpack, on, he, they, spinner, bug, Elmo, help, turn, blow, socks, underwear, pants, shirt, Legos, boat, bowl, rice, airplane, plate, pillow, spoon, towel, jacket, slide</li> <li>▪ Working on: Puzzle, Crayon, Bathtub, Soap, Knife,</li> </ul>	42	93		
Matching Words to Pictures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: Cookie, computer, ball, chip, video, milk, juice, balloon, toilet, banana, popcorn, hot dog, waffle, bus, train, car, cat, dog, hamburger, pig, frog, cow, duck, bubbles, television, music, cup, table, apple, pig, horse, fish, bear, monkey, rice cakes, french fries, spaghetti, cereal, shoes, boat, airplane, helicopter, plate, rice, bowl, pillow, sink, hairbrush, towel, jacket, swing, slide, red, blue, green, orange, yellow, purple, scissors, spoon, backpack, socks, underwear, pants, shirt, Legos, cracker, book, chair, video</li> <li>• Working on: Knife, soap, crayon, puzzle, bathtub</li> </ul>	37	70		
Spelling-Using typing device	9	64		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: chip, go, yes, no, milk, video, juice, book, swing, cat, dog, cow, cookie, computer, open, put, blow, turn, tickle, shirt, socks, shoes, pants, underwear, car, out, cup, Child, bus, day, bug, spinner, want, balloon, popcorn, toilet, tissue, spoon, ball, bubbles, bed, Mom, Dad, cracker, train, spaghetti, red, blue, yellow, orange, green, purple, spoon, chair, music, brush, fork, slide, boat, tortilla, corn, hamburger, banana, Legos,</li> <li>• Working On: toothbrush, French fries, cereal, scissors, backpack, crayon, marker,</li> </ul>				
Matching Money-match identical coins and bills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: penny, nickel, dime, quarter, \$1, \$5, \$10, \$20</li> </ul>	4	8		
Receptive Money-Receptively identify coins by name and amount <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: penny, nickel</li> <li>• Working on: dime, quarter</li> </ul>	2	2		
Matching money to amount-Match coins/bills to amount <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: penny, nickel, dime, quarter</li> </ul>	1	4		
Writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: Imitating vertical and horizontal lines, circles, tracing vertical and horizontal lines</li> <li>• Working on: Tracing “I,” “A,” “N”</li> </ul>	3	5		

**Assessment:** Observation, Cold Probe Data

**Expressive Language or Communication Skills**

**Goal:** Child will use appropriately mand (request) in 10 out of 10 opportunities without prompts.

**Objectives:** Child will mand/ request functional objects in their natural environment by touching and spelling words and request using yes/no:

Progress in tasks mastered:	2/08	8/08		
Expressive Language-Requesting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: requesting desired items using “I want___” using a Dynavox (assistive technology device), typing letters from dictation (mastered all letters), asking for help, putting two words together (ex. Tortilla chip)</li> <li>• Currently working on expanding requests and length of requests and requesting using yes/no.</li> </ul>	50%	85%		
Expressive Language-Labeling Pictures/Objects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: chip, milk, video, juice, book, swing, cat, dog, cow, cookie, computer, shirt, socks, shoes, pants, underwear, car, cup, bus, bug, spinner, balloon, popcorn, toilet, tissue, spoon, ball, bubbles, bed, Mom, Dad, cracker, train, spaghetti, red, blue, yellow, orange, green, purple, spoon, chair, music, brush, fork, slide, boat, tortilla, corn, hamburger, banana, Legos,</li> <li>• Working On: Toothbrush, french fries, cereal, scissors, backpack, crayon, marker,</li> </ul>	0	52		

**Assessment:** Observation and Data Collection

**Independent Life Skills**

**Goal:** Child will increase his ability to perform daily life skills on 3 consecutive cold probes.

**Objectives:** Child will be able to independently dress himself, eat, brush teeth, toilet, bathe, and complete independent work.

Progress in tasks mastered:	2/08	8/08		
Independent Work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mastered: Open drawer, take out, complete, put back and close</li> </ul>	40%	95%		

drawer for more than one drawer tasks, using increased number of tasks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working on increasing the amount of work he is doing.</li> </ul>				
Dressing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: Shirt on/off, pants on/off, underwear on/off, jacket on/off, socks off, shoes off</li> <li>• Working on: Socks on, shoes on, jacket zipper</li> </ul>	10	10		
Eating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastered: Using fork, spoon, open cup</li> <li>• Working on: Stabbing food with fork and cutting with knife</li> </ul>	3	3		

**Assessment:** Observation and Data Collection

### ABA Treatment Plan

In the following year, we will continue to address:

1. Child has an occasional tendency to use aggressive behaviors when he is unable to communicate his wants and needs, which manifests itself in actions related to frustration and withdrawal. We will continue to work on Child's use of appropriate social communication abilities to express his wants and needs to decrease aversive and maladaptive behaviors and to increase his cognitive abilities. We continue to work on reducing Child's disruptive self-stimulatory (stims) behaviors. This is targeted with behavior plans, as we continue to teach the mands (requests) that Child needs to communicate. Child is currently using a token system in order to decrease inappropriate and self-stimulatory behaviors. Child is learning to use an assistive communication device this year in order to increase his ability to communicate with others and reduce frustration. This targeting addresses many areas in Child's life, including but not limited to his relationship with his older sister as well as his whole family and in community situations so it can be appropriately generalized over a number of situations.
2. Child's needs for unaided performance in age-appropriate, self-help capabilities and skills, including bathing, dressing, grooming, and toilet use. This helps with his independence and self-esteem, which in turn promote appropriate social skills. While these self-help capabilities and skills have improved, they still need to be appropriately generalized over a number of situations and for consistent task completion.
3. Child's rigidity in eating certain foods with the goal of unaided performance in age-appropriate, self-help abilities and skills essential to eating a healthy and balanced diet. We are continuing with a behaviorally based feeding program to help Child to tolerate trying new foods without tantrums. His diet is currently self-restricted and limited.
4. Child is improving his understanding of the concept of sequencing to help him

learn and independently carry out sequences in his environment (i.e. washing hands, brushing teeth, putting trash in the trash can, going to bed routine, etc.) This has been used to help Child to be a functional part of his household. Child is learning to work independently for longer periods of time and doing more difficult tasks in order to prepare him to complete tasks around the house and later in a job. While his work on this concept has improved, it still needs to be appropriately generalized over a number of situations and for consistent task completion.

5. Child's communication has been primarily through hand signs, pointing and gesturing. We are increasing his receptive and expressive manding repertoire, matching them with appropriate pre-verbal and emerging verbal skills to reduce his communicative frustrations. We are currently teaching Child to use an assistive communication device to increase his ability to communicate with others. This device will require Child touch and type words so we will continue to focus on reading and spelling words as a major component of his programs.

Because Child's father is in the military and his career involves moving every few years, it is extremely important that Child learn these self-help and self-regulation skills so that he is prepared for these frequent transitions. He also will be able to take these learned skills with him, so that it will be a familiar part of his life when changing homes, schools, etc. The targeted skills have become quite involved. Behavior plans have been developed so that everyone can be as consistent as possible in working with Child on these issues in home, school and community settings. Child still does not understand basic communication and needs to learn why it is easier to communicate with signs rather than an occasional tendency to use aggressive behavior caused by frustration and withdrawal. For the next year, we will continue to monitor, design and implementing these programs, as well as continuing to help Child fill in any missing gaps that he may have. This helps him to communicate effectively and functionally with others in his environment.

I strongly recommend continued services.

Feel free to contact me with any questions or clarifications regarding Child's ABA programming. He has excelled with this method of learning and is able to take what he has learned in his sessions and generalize many of those skills to other environments. We will be teaching Child in these more generalized environments in the upcoming year. I look forward to continuing my work with Child and his family.



EXAMPLE THREE

Name: Child  
Date of Birth:

Date of Report: June 1, 2004

Evaluation period:  
Sponsor SSN:  
Referring provider:  
Supervisor Hours each month:  
Tutor Hours each month:

**ABA Progress Report**

**Receptive Language Skills**

**Goal:** Child will receptively identify (by pointing, touching or giving) concepts given 9 out of 10 trials (90%).

**Objectives:** Child will identify:

Progress:	12/02	6/03	12/03	6/04
Functions of objects (e.g. give me what you brush your teeth with.)	55%	80%	100%	100%
Features of objects (e.g. show me what has wheels. a car)	60%	80%	100%	100%
Exclusions	20%	50%	75%	95%
Common Features of objects	20%	45%	70%	95%

**Assessment:** Trial-by-Trial Data Collection

**Expressive Language Skills**

**Goal:** Child will expressively identify verbally, concepts given 9 out of 10 trials.

**Objectives:** Child will identify:

Progress:	12/02	6/03	12/03	6/04
Functions of objects (e.g. give me what you brush your teeth with.)	35%	65%	90%	100%
Features of objects (e.g. show me what has wheels. a car)	40%	70%	95%	95%
Exclusions	0%	30%	55%	90%
Common Features of objects	0%	35%	45%	90%

**Assessment:** Trial-by-Trial Data Collection

**Socialization/Communication**

**Goal:** Child will use language to respond and interact with those in his environment with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities without prompts (80%).

**Objectives:** Child will:

Progress:	12/02	6/03	12/03	6/04
use complete sentences to request play activities, to	25%	65%	85%	95%

obtain more of an item, or to initiate, continue or terminate an activity				
gain the attention before requesting	30%	50%	80%	90%
use appropriate eye contact in greetings, play situations and conversations	30%	45%	75%	80%
use appropriate greetings and eye contact when entering and leaving the room	30%	50%	75%	80%

**Assessment:** Observation and Data Collection Checklists

**Goal:** Child will use socially appropriate language to respond and interact with those in his environment with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities without prompts.

**Objectives:** Child will:

Progress:	12/02	6/03	12/03	6/04
demonstrate understanding of common courtesy (spontaneously apologizing, saying please and thank you)	20%	35%	50%	60%
respond appropriately using an observation of a social situation (laugh when a joke is told)	0%	25%	45%	65%
take turns with conversation	40%	45%	50%	55%
respect property of others by asking permission for use	50%	60%	65%	65%
recognize the need for assistance and seek help	75%	85%	100%	100%
attempt to solve his own problems socially	35%	25%	10%	25%
stand up for his rights (it's not fair)	0%	10%	0%	10%

**Assessment:** Observation and Data Collection Checklists

**Goal:** Child will actively participate in activities with 80% accuracy in 4 out of 5 opportunities without prompts.

**Objectives:** Child will:

Progress:	12/02	6/03	12/03	6/04
provide personal information (name, age, names of siblings, parents names, etc.)	75%	85%	85%	85%
wait for his own turn during activities	50%	55%	60%	65%

**Assessment:** Observation and Data Collection Checklists

## ABA Treatment Plan

In the following six months, we will address:

- Within the last 16 months, we have been targeting several aggressive behaviors that have affected Child's socialization and family life. He has stopped hitting and kicking his parents as well his younger sister. However, Child continues to put himself in dangerous situations (i.e. running out in the street due to his impulsiveness). Child's family continues to restrict his activities outside the home due to these behaviors. For the last 12 months, we have worked with Child's family to help his anxiety and impulsiveness by base-lining behaviors prior to, during and after behavioral procedures have been implemented. We will continue to use systematic manipulations of Child's home environment to help him in this ever increasing source of anxiety for his parents.
- Child's ability to use appropriate expressive language to express frustration, happiness, illness, hunger, etc. has greatly improved. He has stopped using aggressive behaviors when he is unable to communicate his wants and needs, but does use aggressive behavior when he wants are denied. We will continue to develop various interventions to target these behaviors as well as continuing to teach the various concepts that Child needs to communicate. These targets will address many areas in Child's life. He continues to have a difficult time sharing attention with his sister from his parents.
- Child continues to self restrict himself with rigidity in eating certain foods. We have begun a behaviorally based feeding program, to help Child to tolerate trying new foods. While he is making significant gains in this area, he continues to need this level of support to try any new food for any extended period of time.
- Child is continuing using the toilet without fear. He completes the toileting process completely and independently each time he uses the facilities. However, he still continues to need to be reminded for several steps of the hand washing process.
- Child will continue with understanding of the concept of sequencing will be taken to help him to learn and independently carry out sequences in his environment (i.e. washing hands, brushing teeth, setting the table, clearing his dishes after he eats, putting trash in the trash can, and going to bed routine). This will be utilized to help Child to be a functional part of his household.

I strongly recommend continued services to pursue the goals outlined above.

Child is very lucky to have the supportive family that he has. His parents have been the most consistent part of his programming and one of the major reasons why Child has made great progress. Child still has many issues associated with the disability of Autism, but thanks to his ABA programming and his parent's consistency, Child is learning how to function in society. Behavior plans will continue to be developed and implemented in order for everyone to be as consistent as possible in working with Child on these issues. He continues to maintain the communication basis he has learned and has begun working on these skills and understanding why he needs to. For the next six months, we will continue these behavior programs, as well as continuing to help Child fill in any missing gaps that he may have and helping him to communicate effectively and functionally with others in his environment. Feel free to contact me with any questions or clarifications regarding Child's ABA programming. He continues to excel with this method of learning, and is able to take what he has learned in his sessions and generalize many of those skills to other environments. I am lucky to be able to work with such a wonderful family and look forward to continuing my work with them.