

Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration Project

A new Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration Project from TRICARE will expand the TRICARE Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) benefit to a broader population of TRICARE beneficiaries with autism spectrum disorder, allowing the use of additional categories of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) providers, including tutors.

The demonstration project, effective for claims on or after March 15, 2008, is an enhancement to the TRICARE ECHO program for those TRICARE beneficiaries diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. This demonstration project allows reimbursement for behavioral-based tutoring services from providers, including non-certified educational intervention service providers and tutors (and tutors-in-training), who provide applied behavior analysis (ABA) services.

Authorized supervisors will be required to direct and oversee these tutors who will provide hands-on services to children with autism. Tutors must be credentialed and specially trained to work with children with special needs.

All care submitted for reimbursement under the autism demonstration will require prior authorization. Applicable beneficiary cost-shares will apply. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2009 (NDAA 09) changed the ECHO cap from \$2,500/month, to \$36,000 per fiscal year (FY) for certain services (including autism) effective for dates of service beginning October 14, 2008. After the TRICARE beneficiary pays his/her monthly cost share, TRICARE will pay up to \$36,000 per fiscal year for each ECHO-registered beneficiary for authorized ECHO benefits (the limit on ECHO Home Health Care benefits is separate). If an ECHO beneficiary's costs exceed \$36,000 in a fiscal year, the beneficiary is responsible for paying the additional costs.

Here are some frequently asked questions and definitions of the Autism Demonstration Project:

Demonstration Project-Related Questions

What is the Autism Demonstration Project?

The Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration Project opens up eligibility for TRICARE reimbursement within the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) program to a wider range of children. New categories of educational providers are also eligible to give services under the demonstration project.

Who is eligible to receive services under the demonstration?

Benefits under the demonstration project are available to children of active duty Service members (ADSMs) who are:

- At least 18 months of age
- Diagnosed by a Primary Care Provider (PCP) or [specialized autism spectrum disorder \(ASD\) provider](#) with one of the following:
 - Autistic Disorder (AD)
 - Asperger's Disorder (AS)
 - Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD)



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- Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS)
- Enrolled in their Service's [Exceptional Family Member Program](#) (EFMP)
- Registered (or in the process of registering) in TRICARE's Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) program through TriWest. The PCP or ASD provider can refer a child to the ECHO program or the family can request registration by filling out TriWest's [Case Management Referral Form](#)
- Authorized by the TriWest to receive care under the demonstration

Why is the Autism Demonstration Project being initiated?

The demonstration project will allow eligible children to get services from a wider range of non-clinical providers and offer training to parents and caregivers of children with ASD.

How is this different from the services currently available under the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) program?

TRICARE currently authorizes only board-certified Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapists for ASD-related services. The demonstration will allow tutors and tutors-in-training supervised by an ABA therapist, to deliver EIA services to eligible beneficiaries.

What type of providers can deliver EIA services under the demonstration?

Qualified tutors and tutors-in-training, who are not otherwise available under the ECHO program, will be available to deliver EIA services to eligible beneficiaries under the demonstration project while under a supervisory agreement with an ABA therapist.

What is a Behavior Plan (BP)?

A plan designed to modify behavior using evidence-based practices and techniques; it is based on the direct observation and measurement of behavior as well as a functional behavioral assessment. The BP must:

- Be developed by the ABA therapist directing the delivery of EIA services to the child
- Identify long and intermediate-term habilitative and behavioral goals and short-term behavioral objectives that are behaviorally defined; and
- Identify the criteria that will be used to measure achievement of behavioral objectives; and
- Clearly state the schedule of services planned and the individuals providers to deliver those services; and
- Specify a tutor staffing pattern for services that:
 - Reflects the use of multiple tutors to provide intensive services (i.e., greater than 20 hour per week) to a single child to enhance generalization of learned behaviors; *or*
 - Reflects the use of a single tutor to provide intensive services when extraordinary circumstances such as scarcity of tutors or clinical contraindications to the use of multiple tutors are present. Such circumstances must be documented in the BP and TriWest may request further documentation and with cause, deny the use of a single tutor to provide intensive EIA services of greater than 20 hours per week to a single beneficiary.
- Specify the predominant location at which EIA services are to be delivered as in the home, specialized clinic/facility, at school, other location, or in no predominant location; and
- Include a description of how (if at all) EIA services described in the BP are related to (supportive, complementary, etc.) other special education services targeted at improving the core deficits of ASD provided under the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) developed in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA); and



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- Summarize pertinent issues and recommendations for modifying the BP resulting from quarterly treatment progress meetings held with the child's primary caregivers.

What is an EIA Progress Report (EPR)?

A report on progress made towards achieving the long- and intermediate-term habilitative and behavioral goals and short-term behavioral objectives that were identified in the BP. THE EPR must be:

- Developed by the ABA therapist directing the delivery of EIA services
- Submitted by the ABA therapist along with the required BP to TriWest upon the termination of services under the direction of that ABA therapist with a child
- Report on the progress achieved on behavioral objectives identified in the BP; and
- Document a child's progress towards achieving behavioral objectives through analysis and reporting of quantifiable behavioral data including, but not limited to the following:
 - The frequency, quality and intensity of expression of targeted behaviors in natural situations (e.g., in unstructured situations in the home or classroom rather than during treatment) outside of EIA teaching activities; and
 - The degree to which a child's responses are unprompted versus prompted; and
 - The generalization of learning to significant age-appropriate behaviors that were not the immediate objectives of EIA; and
 - Additional elaborative benchmarks and criteria as the Director, TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) or designee determines necessary to insure quality of delivered services.
- Describe the data collection procedures; and
- Provide a narrative summary of the data supporting findings of progress or lack of progress in meeting long and intermediate-term habilitative and behavioral goals and short-term behavioral objectives.

An EPR is not required to be submitted along with that EIA Supervisor's first BP for a child receiving services.

Provider-Related Questions

Who is considered an EIA tutor under the demonstration?

All eligible tutors and tutors-in-training must:

- Be certified by and employed or contracted with a EIA supervisor
- Meet requirements for education, training, experience, and competency
- Successfully complete federal, state and county criminal background checks for the state and county in which the EIA tutor is currently working and residing.

What is the difference between an EIA supervisor and an EIA tutor?

A supervisor can be associated with either an individual or an organization who meets the requirements for reimbursement under the demonstration. This individual or organization will directly employ or contract with tutors. The EIA supervisor will develop and maintain the BP and will evaluate the effectiveness of the behavioral plan (BP). Tutors will work one-on-one with children to implement the BP.

What constitutes an EIA Tutor?

An EIA Tutor who renders EIA services is qualified by meeting TRICARE certification requirements and delivers services to TRICARE beneficiaries only under the supervision of an EIA Supervisor. EIA Tutors work one-on-one with children implementing the BP and gather quantifiable behavioral data necessary for the



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EIA Supervisor to evaluate the effectiveness of the BP in achieving the identified goals and objectives for the TRICARE beneficiary.

What services cannot be performed by an EIA Tutor?

An EIA Tutor may not design a Behavioral Plan, establish a child's BP, develop the EIA Progress Report (EPR) or bill independently for services provided to TRICARE beneficiaries.

Who Supervises EIA Tutors?

The supervisor must be a TRICARE authorized EIA Supervisor as defined by TRICARE. The supervisor may not be a relative, subordinate or employee of the tutor.

What type of provider is qualified to make a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder?

TRICARE recognizes two types of providers to diagnose an autism spectrum disorder: a Primary Care Physician (PCP) or a Specialized ASD Provider.

What is a Specialized ASD Provider?

A physician board-certified or board-eligible in behavioral developmental pediatrics, neurodevelopmental pediatrics, pediatric neurology or child psychiatry; or a physician or Ph.D. educated psychologist working primarily with children with:

- One or more years of supervised fellowship training that included 40 or more hours of clinical experience in comprehensive evaluations for ASD as evidenced by the name, location and dates of the qualifying fellowship; or
- One or more years of supervised on-the-job training that included the performance of ASD diagnostic evaluations an average of twice each month as evidenced by the position, location and dates of the qualifying on-the-job training.

Demonstration Benefits-Related Questions

Who is this program available for?

This demonstration project is available only for active duty family members.

Is there training required for the parent/caregiver under the program?

Yes. One parent (or caregiver) in the child's immediate family must complete annual classroom and hands-on practical training in each year that EIA services are provided under this demonstration. It is not necessary that the same family member meet this requirement each year. Classroom and practical training must focus at a minimum on the following topics: (1) how to implement the BP at home; (2) how behavioral change is measured and how can progress in the child receiving services be tracked; (3) how can parents/caregivers support the principles and methods of the EIA service delivered; and (4) how to promote generalization of behaviors learned as a result of the EIA services.

What is the government's cost-share?

The government cost-share is a maximum of \$36,000 per fiscal year per beneficiary. The government cost-share paid for training required of parents/caregivers under the Demonstration will not exceed \$1,500 per individual and \$4,500 per family during each year in which EIA services are received by the beneficiary.

What will the government cost-share?

The government will cost-share the evaluation of a beneficiary, including:

- Observation in school, at home, or in the community;



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- Professional fees for the creation of EPRs, including data analysis, using CPT code 99080;
- Jointly delivered services by an EIA Supervisor with an EIA Tutor or EIA Tutor-in-Training, using HCPCS code S5108;
- Services provided directly by an EIA Tutor to a beneficiary using HCPCS code H2019;
- The training necessary for parents/caregivers to meet the training requirements;
- Professional fees for conducting in-person the required quarterly treatment progress meetings with TRICARE beneficiary's caregivers, using CPT code 90887.

Are jointly delivered services permitted?

Services delivered jointly, in-person, to a TRICARE beneficiary by an EIA Supervisor with an EIA Tutor or EIA Tutor-in-Training may be provided during directly supervised fieldwork as defined in the TRICARE Operations Manual. They are reimbursable to the ICSP or OCSP as services provided by the EIA Supervisor using HCPCS code S5108.

You can view the latest information on the Autism Demonstration Project, including a list of benefit coverage and costs at TRICARE's [Autism Services Demonstration](#) page.

Autism Definitions

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) – The design, implementation, and evaluation of systematic environmental changes to produce socially significant change in human behavior through skill acquisition and the reduction of problematic behavior. ABA includes direct observation and measurement of behavior and the identification of functional relations between behavior and the environment. Contextual factors, establishing operations, antecedent stimuli, positive reinforcers, and other consequences are used to produce the desired behavior change.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) – Collective term indicating Autistic Disorder (AD), Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDDNOS), and Asperger's Disorder (AS) as defined by the American Psychiatric Association's (APA's) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV-TR). For the purposes of the Demonstration, Childhood Disintegrative Disorder (CDD) is also included under the ASD term.

Behavior Plan (BP) – A plan designed to modify behavior using evidence-based practices and techniques, it is based on the direct observation and measurement of behavior as well as a functional behavioral assessment.

CHAMPUS Maximum Allowable Charge (CMAC) – The maximum amount TRICARE will cover for nationally established fees (*i.e.*, fees for professional services). CMAC is the TRICARE-allowable charge for covered services when appropriately applied to services priced under CMAC.

Educational Interventions For Autism Spectrum Disorders (EIA) – The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recently defined education as the fostering of acquisition of skills and knowledge to assist a child to develop independence and personal responsibility; it encompasses not only academic learning but also socialization, adaptive skills, communication, improvement of interfering behaviors, and generalization of abilities across multiple environments. EIA consists of individualized behavioral interventions employed to systematically increase adaptive behaviors and to modify maladaptive or inappropriate behaviors and are most often used on a one-to-one basis.



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EIA Progress Report (EPR) – A report on progress made towards achieving the long- and intermediate-term habilitative and behavioral goals and short-term behavioral objectives that were identified in the BP.

EIA Supervisor – A TRICARE authorized provider of EIA services who meets the TRICARE qualifications and requirements. An EIA Supervisor may also provide supervisory oversight to EIA Tutors and certain other EIA Supervisors. An EIA Supervisor consults, provides training to caregivers, conducts behavioral evaluations of children with ASD, and directs behavioral plan development for TRICARE beneficiaries. An EIA Supervisor is a clinical teacher who educates, observes, assesses, and supervises the educational activities and service delivery of EIA Tutors.

EIA Tutor – A provider of EIA services qualified by meeting TRICARE requirements who delivers services to TRICARE beneficiaries only under the supervision of an EIA Supervisor. EIA Tutors work one-on-one with children implementing the BP designed and maintained by the EIA Supervisor and gather quantifiable behavioral data necessary for the EIA Supervisor to evaluate the effectiveness of the BP in achieving identified goals and objectives. An EIA Tutor may not conduct behavioral evaluations, establish a child's BP, or bill independently for services provided to TRICARE beneficiaries.

EIA Tutor In Training – A provider of EIA services who has fulfilled all of the requirements to qualify as an EIA Tutor except for the experience requirement and is delivering services under the supervision of an EIA Supervisor.

Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) – A mandatory program for all active duty Service members and identifies family members with special medical and/or educational needs documenting the services they require.

Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) – A supplemental program to the TRICARE basic program provides eligible active duty family members with an additional financial resource for an integrated set of services and supplies designed to assist in the reduction of the disabling effects of the beneficiary's qualifying condition. In addition to the autism spectrum disorders covered under the current Demonstration, ECHO-eligible conditions can include moderate or severe mental retardation, serious physical disability or an extraordinary physical or psychological condition such that the beneficiary is homebound.

Functional Behavioral Assessment and Analysis – The process of identifying the variables that reliably predict and maintain problem behaviors. The functional behavioral assessment and analysis processing typically involves: (1) identifying the problem behavior(s), (2) developing hypotheses about the antecedents and consequences likely to trigger or support the problem behavior, (3) performing an analysis of the function of the behavior by testing the hypothesis.

Individual Corporate Services Provider (ICSP) – An individual EIA Supervisor, not incorporated, meeting specified criteria that permit the EIA Supervisor to receive reimbursement for services provided by EIA Tutors implementing their intervention plan.

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) – A written statement for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA).

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) – A written statement for an infant or toddler with developmental needs.



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Jointly Delivered Services – Services delivered jointly, in-person, to a TRICARE beneficiary by an EIA Supervisor with an EIA Tutor or EIA Tutor-in-Training, as may be provided during directly supervised fieldwork. These services are reimbursable to the ICSP or OCSP as services provided by the EIA Supervisor using HCPCS code H5108.

Organizational Corporate Services Provider (OCSP) – A corporation, foundation, or public entity that meets the TRICARE definition of a CSP that predominantly renders services of a type uniquely allowable as an ECHO benefit. An OCSP may employ directly or contract with EIA Supervisors and EIA Tutors.

Primary Care Provider (PCP) – A Primary Care Manager (PCM) under the TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Prime Remote for Active Duty Family Member (TPRADFM) or TRICARE Standard programs; and a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) provider or team of providers or a network provider to whom a beneficiary is assigned for primary care services at the time of enrollment in TRICARE Prime.

Specialized ASD Provider – A TRICARE-authorized provider who is MD board-certified/board-eligible in behavioral developmental pediatrics, neurodevelopmental pediatrics, pediatric neurology or child psychiatry. A specialized ASD provider may also be a physician or PhD-educated psychologist working primarily with children with specialized fellowship or on-the-job training.



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