



Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders

August 12, 2020

Board Members

*Trisha Lozano, MEd,
Madam Chair*

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BCBA, LBA*

Korri Ward, Parent

*Julie Ostrovsky,
Parent*

The State of Nevada Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
Division of Health Care Financing and Policy (DHCFP)
1100 E William Street
Suite 101
Carson City, NV 89701-4747

RE: AMENDMENTS TO THE STATE PLAN FOR MEDICAID SERVICES

To Whom It May Concern:

The Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorder (NCASD) appointed by Governor Steven Sisolak was formed to provide leadership, oversight and legislative advocacy in support of Nevadans living with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). As ASD leaders in Nevada, we speak for those that cannot advocate for their own needs.

We are aware of the need to address the budget shortfall as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic impact. However, the rate reimbursement reduction of 6% for Nevada Medicaid providers for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services will be devastating for our community. This change may seem small but the impact of it will span across our state in a way that will eventually cause irreparable harm. It will begin with the reduction of the workforce in the field of special needs that is already sparse and even non-existent in rural areas of our state. This will ultimately result in a loss of services for an already vulnerable population that needs more than they currently access, not less.

In 2015, the rate for a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) was deemed to be insufficient and the rate was increased to the current rate of \$31.30. Even with the RBT reimbursement rate, the provider community gave united and passionate testimony that this was going to fail. In February 2019, Nevada was the fourth lowest reimbursing state with the mean rate across the nation being \$48.29, ranging from \$30 to \$76.08. Nevada's current rate is already failing, and a 6% reduction would move the rate to \$29.42, the lowest in the nation.



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The rate methodology used in 2015 to determine the RBT rate lacked accuracy and components such as the costs of initial training to complete RBT certifications, as well as the parameters of maintaining certification. In addition, it is important to understand the high rate of turnover in the field. In November 2018, Forbes put out an article stating, “while comprehensive and widespread data on ABA services is difficult to find, available data puts the low-end estimate at 30% annual turnover, noting that some providers have reported turnover rates as high as 75+% for direct care providers or RBTs (Registered Behavior Technician).”

In 2017, the Board of Applied Behavior Analysis was established in Nevada. The community is grateful for the opportunity and numerous benefits that come with having a board specific to the unique needs of the field. However, with this board came regulations resulting in additional costs for providers.

We, as a community, need to ensure reimbursement rates are adequate enough to provide the number of professionals needed to serve the growing population of Nevadans with autism, as evidenced by the increasing waitlist as well as to ensure the quality of the workforce. The rate decrease of 6% will not allow providers to continue to serve clients with Medicaid. In addition, the Autism Treatment Assistance Program (ATAP) has in the past reimbursed at the Medicaid rates for ABA. Providers that serve clients with ATAP funding will also be impacted by this change.

These two funding sources serve numerous Nevadans diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders:

<u>ATAP Data: February 2019</u>	<u>ATAP Data: July 2020</u>
Active Children: 648	Active Children: 892
Funding Source	Funding Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straight ATAP: 394 • Medicaid: 254 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straight ATAP: 581 • Medicaid: 311
Waitlist: 417	Waitlist: 136

There are numerous providers already at capacity with wait lists that may force a child to wait for up to a year due to the number of individuals that require ABA services. The rate decrease would limit providers ability to sustain quality staff and will subsequently require them to remove themselves as a Medicaid provider. The reduction in providers would further impact an already strained system. This loss of services will lead to regression of skills achieved through



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medically necessary services for people with Autism, leading to long-lasting and detrimental consequences for the individual, family and community.

Nevada is dealing with the ramification of a global pandemic that is unprecedented and legislators have challenging decisions to make most certainly. The proposed 6% rate reduction for Nevada Medicaid providers to address the budget shortfall as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic impact will take away benefits for our most vulnerable recipients, their families, and the community we are charged to serve. While the 6% Medicaid reduction has been legislatively mandated, we urge the Division of Health Care Financing and Policy to monitor the effects of this rate change on the health and well-being of individuals with autism adjust these rates at the first opportunity.

The Nevada Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders respectfully asks for your consideration of this request. The Commission is available to answer questions and provide information, as needed.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Trisha Lozano'.

Trisha Lozano, Madam Chair