

## AUTISM THERAPY ALTERNATIVES

### ACTION

Ensure that all appropriate therapies are provided to children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and that Congress does not pass health care or education legislation that could have the unintended consequence of designating applied behavioral analysis (ABA) therapy as the sole means to treat ASD. Therefore, we urge members of Congress to use caution when writing ASD legislation to ensure that all therapies, not just ABA therapy, are included for coverage.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW?

There is a growing trend in both education and health care settings to utilize ABA therapists to provide services to children identified with ASD. Although ABA may be an effective therapy, so are others, such as speech-language pathology.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO SAY?

- ASHA does not oppose the use of ABA services; however, singling it out in legislation as the only treatment for behavioral health issues for individuals with developmental disabilities—including those with ASD—limits consumer choice.
- According to reports from speech-language pathologists, a growing number of students with ASD are being denied necessary school-based speech and language services.
- ASHA members believe this trend is due to some school systems' sole reliance on ABA therapists to oversee, recommend, and provide services to students with ASD.
- The exclusive use of ABA interventions for these students violates their right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) as mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- In Tricare, the Department of Defense's health care program, there are efforts under way that may have the unintended consequence of denying habilitative services to some individuals with developmental disabilities by restricting the choice of treatment—and, hence, provider—to ABA therapy.
- Both the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the U.S. Department of Education have issued guidance on this concern.
  - CMS guidance states, "While much of the current national discussion focuses on one particular treatment modality called Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA), there are other recognized and emerging treatment modalities for children with ASD."
  - The U.S. Department of Education guidance document recognizes the importance of speech-language pathology services and the necessary role of a speech-language pathologist in both evaluation and treatment of children with ASD.

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