

Iowa Autism Support Program Information for Parents and Families

What Is the Autism Support Program?

The Autism Support Program (ASP) was created by the Iowa Legislature in 2013 and began operation on April 1, 2014. ASP provides funding for applied behavior analysis (ABA) services to children under the age of fourteen at the time of application who are not eligible to receive ABA services through Medicaid or private health insurers and who meet certain diagnostic and financial eligibility criteria. The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services Division of Aging and Disability Services administers the program. ASP is a separate program from Iowa Medicaid.

What Benefits Are Provided by the Program?

ASP provides funding for children with autism to receive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services from Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) and professional staff working under the supervision of BCBAs. Only ABA services are covered through this program. Other types of services and therapies for children with autism may be funded by Medicaid or private insurers.

What Is Applied Behavior Analysis?

“Applied Behavior Analysis” is a highly researched and scientifically validated approach to understanding behavior and how it is affected by the environment and then using this knowledge to bring about meaningful and positive change in behavior that helps improve how a child functions within the home and community. ABA focuses on principles that explain how learning takes place and on measuring and evaluating a child’s behavior. ABA has been shown to be effective in:

- improving social and communication skills.
- reducing behaviors that are harmful or affect learning negatively.
- teaching new functional skills; and
- generalizing behavior and skills across settings and individuals.

Who Is Eligible to Participate in the Autism Support Program?

A child is eligible to receive assistance through ASP if he or she meets all the following:

- the child is under the age of fourteen (14) **at the time of application**
- the child has a diagnosis on the Autism spectrum made by a child psychiatrist, developmental pediatrician, or a clinical psychologist
- the diagnosis is dated within twenty-four (24) months of the date of application
- the child does not qualify for Medicaid or any other public funding for ABA services
- the child does not have coverage available for ABA services through any private insurance carrier
- the child’s family meets the income guidelines for the program

What Are the Income Guidelines for ASP?

- Families with household incomes at or below 500% of the federal poverty level (FPL) may qualify for assistance under this program.
- Income is determined by applying a modified adjusted gross income calculation to the income reported on the most recently filed federal tax return for the household. The tax return must have been filed within 15 months of the application date.

Are There Other Sources of Funding for ABA Services?

- Before applying to the Autism Support Program, you should determine whether your child qualifies for Iowa Medicaid, either based on your family income, or as a child with special needs. You can obtain more information by contacting Iowa Medicaid Member Services at 1-800-338-8366.
- You may also want to place your child's name on a waiting list for a Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Waiver. To learn more about HCBS Waivers, go to: <https://hhs.iowa.gov/programs/welcome-iowa-medicaid/iowa-medicaid-programs/hcbs>
- As discussed under the ASP eligibility section, you will also need to determine what, if any, benefits are available to you through your private insurance carrier.
- As the result of a state law change that became effective in 2018, the number of private insurance carriers that are required to provide an ABA benefit has increased. Some private insurance plans offer an ABA benefit that requires a high deductible or co-pay amount. Unfortunately, children with any private insurance ABA benefit are not eligible to access the Autism Support Program even if the out-of-pocket expenses to use that benefit are cost prohibitive.

How Do I Apply for the Program?

Contact the ASP administrator by email at: AutismSupport@hhs.iowa.gov or by phone at: 515-725-3350 to request an application.

What Information and Documentation Is Needed to Apply?

You will need to provide:

- a fully completed and signed **HHS application form**;
- a **copy of the child's certified birth certificate** as proof of age;
- **income information** from your most recently filed federal tax return (Form 1040 or Form 1040A) to determine your household size and modified adjusted gross income (**please do not send a copy of the return**; just complete the information requested on the application, using the numbers from your tax return) and sign the attestation statement on the form;
- your **insurance card** (or your child's card) or other evidence with child's name as proof of insurance coverage;
- **proof of non-coverage or denial of coverage** for ABA services by all insurance carriers, which may be any of the following:
 - an insurance policy document (such as a member benefits guide) that clearly specifies non-

coverage for ABA services, or

- an explanation of benefits showing ABA is excluded from coverage, or
 - a letter from the insurer stating that ABA is not covered or has been denied, or some other written documentation stating that insurance funding is not available to your child (**Note: if your child is covered only by the State's Hawk-i children's health insurance program, no additional documentation of non-coverage is required**)
- a copy of the medical report verifying your child's diagnosis of autism made within 24 months of the date of application by a child psychiatrist, a developmental pediatrician, or a clinical psychologist. Please include the full diagnostic report, including the practitioner's credentials and signature.

Will I Have to Pay for ABA Services Under This Program?

- Families of children enrolled in this program may have a cost share (co-pay) based on income. (See the [ASP Program Participant Cost Share Table](#).)
- Families with household incomes up to 200% of FPL have no cost share.
- Families with household incomes over 200% of FPL will have a cost share depending on family income. The family cost share ranges from 0.5% to 15% of the service cost.
- If you are unable to pay your cost share, you may apply to the ASP administrator for an exemption from the cost share due to financial hardship.
- It is the responsibility of the ABA provider to collect the cost share payment directly from you and it is your obligation to pay your cost share directly to your service provider.
- The remainder of the service cost will be billed to the Autism Support Program by the provider and ASP will pay the provider directly.

Who Is Qualified to Provide ASP Supervision and Services?

- Only Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), licensed psychiatrists, or licensed psychologists can provide program oversight and supervision. BCBAs hold Masters or Doctorate degrees.
- Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCABAs) and other trained and qualified staff such as RBTs (Registered Behavior Technicians) working under the supervision of a BCBA may provide program services.

How Do I Find an ABA Provider?

- The program administrator will maintain a list of Department-approved autism service providers who are qualified to provide ABA services under the ASP and have joined our provider network.
- If you currently have a service provider, the ASP will work with that provider to authorize services; other qualified ABA providers may be enrolled in the provider network if they are enrolled as an Iowa Medicaid provider of ABA or are willing to become enrolled as an Iowa Medicaid provider.
- Services must be pre-authorized before they can be paid for with ASP funding.

- Once you apply for ASP, you will also be referred to the Iowa Regional Autism Assistance Program (RAP) of the Child Health Specialty Clinics which can assist you with care coordination or other autism-related needs your child may have.

What Is the Regional Autism Assistance Program?

- The Regional Autism Assistance Program (RAP) is operated by The University of Iowa's Child Health Specialty Clinics.
- RAP supports Iowa's children and youth from birth to age 21, and their families, with concerns related to Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).
- RAP helps families navigate local supports and services.
- RAP teams are located in regional centers across the state and are available to provide services to families in all 99 counties.
- Family Navigators are staff members who are also the parent or primary caregiver of a child or youth with special health care needs who work with families to provide emotional support, systems navigation, and connections to community resources.
- There are no fees for RAP care coordination, navigation, and support services.
- For more information, please call toll-free 1-866-219-9119, Ext. 2, email iowa-RAP@uiowa.edu or visit their website at: <https://uihc.org/childrens/services/child-health-specialty-clinics>

Are There Limits in the Amount or Length of Services?

- ASP benefits are available to an eligible child for a period of up to 24 months. If, for some reason, no services are provided during any calendar month, that month does not count against the 24-month total.
- The maximum benefit amount is \$36,000 per year (a year is a 12-month period beginning with the first date of service).
- Initial eligibility for ASP will last for one year from the date services start. At that time, an Annual Financial Eligibility Review form with updated income information must be submitted to determine continued financial eligibility to receive services for the second 12-month period and determine any change in the family cost share.
- Your provider will need to submit a revised service plan and receive re-authorization to continue services under that plan at least every six months during the eligibility period.

What Happens If My Child Reaches the Maximum Age Limitation While Participating in the Program?

- Your child must be **under** age 14 **at the time of application** to the program.
- Once the child has been approved for services, he or she is eligible to continue receiving services for up to 24 months (or the maximum annual benefit amount) even if the child is older than 14.

What Happens After I Find Out My Child Is Eligible for the Program?

- You will be contacted by or referred to care coordination services through the Iowa Regional Autism Assistance Program (RAP) of the Child Health Specialty Clinics to assist with any questions, support needs, or service navigation you may need.
- You will receive information about ABA providers or be referred to a list of providers in your area if you do not already have one.
- If you have a provider, your eligibility determination will be shared with your chosen provider so they may submit a treatment plan and request for service authorization to HHS for approval.
- Once the service plan is approved, the provider will receive authorization to begin ABA services to be funded through the ASP.

Where Can I Find More Information About ASP?

Contact: Iowa Autism Support Program
Division of Aging and Disability Services
Iowa Department of Health & Human Services
Lucas State Office Bldg. 321 E. 12th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319
Email: AutismSupport@hhs.iowa.gov (preferred communication method)
Phone: 515-725-3350 Fax: 855-660-5915

2026 Federal Poverty Level Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Effective 1/2026)

Persons in Household	100% FPL	500% FPL
1	\$15,960	\$79,800
2	\$21,640	\$108,200
3	\$27,320	\$136,600
4	\$33,000	\$165,000
5	\$38,680	\$193,400
6	\$44,360	\$221,800
7	\$50,040	\$250,200
8	\$55,720	\$278,600

Autism Support Program Participant Cost-Share Table

Family income as a % of FPL	% of cost-sharing of service costs	Family income as a % of FPL	% of cost-sharing of service costs
200-209%	0.5%	350-359%	8.0%
210-219%	1.0%	360-369%	8.5%
220-229%	1.5%	370-379%	9.0%
230-239%	2.0%	380-389%	9.5%
240-249%	2.5%	390-399%	10.0%
250-259%	3.0%	400-409%	10.5%
260-269%	3.5%	410-419%	11.0%
270-279%	4.0%	420-429%	11.5%
280-289%	4.5%	430-439%	12.0%
290-299%	5.0%	440-449%	12.5%
300-309%	5.5%	450-459%	13.0%
310-319%	6.0%	460-469%	13.5%
320-329%	6.5%	470-479%	14.0%
330-339%	7.0%	480-489%	14.5%
340-349%	7.5%	490-500%	15.0%

Iowa Autism Resources

Autism Advocacy Groups:

- Autism Society of Iowa - Kris Steinmetz, director, autism50ia@aol.com or <http://autismia.com/>
- Autism Speaks <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>

Family Navigation, Care Coordination Services:

- University of Iowa Regional Autism Assistance Program - can provide a family navigator to assist with finding services, connecting with other families
Website: <https://chsciowa.org/regional-autism-assistance-program.asp>

Medicaid Program Information:

- [HCBS Waiver information](#) with descriptions of each waiver and a comparison chart.
- [Medicaid application online portal](#)
- [Medicaid application-printable](#)
- [Medicaid for Kids with Special Needs program](#)

For Iowa Medicaid application and eligibility questions (including how to apply for Medicaid, services offered, general health care questions) call HHS Contact Center 1-855-889-7985 (Toll Free) Mon-Fri 7:00am to 6:00pm. For Iowa Medicaid member questions call IME member services call 1-800-338-8366 (Toll Free) or 515-256-4606 (in the Des Moines Area) Mon-Fri 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

- Website: <https://hhs.iowa.gov/medicaid/member-services>
- IA Health Link and Medicaid managed care organizations (MCO)
Website: <https://hhs.iowa.gov/medicaid/plans-programs/iowa-health-link>