

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2013

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HOUSE BILL 498  
Committee Substitute Favorable 5/14/13

Short Title: Autism Health Insurance Coverage.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 3, 2013

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT TO REQUIRE HEALTH BENEFIT PLANS, INCLUDING THE STATE HEALTH  
3 PLAN FOR TEACHERS AND STATE EMPLOYEES, TO PROVIDE COVERAGE FOR  
4 THE TREATMENT OF AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 SECTION 1. Article 3 of Chapter 58 of the General Statutes is amended by adding  
7 a new section to read as follows:

8 "**§ 58-3-192. Coverage for autism spectrum disorders.**

9 (a) As used in this section, the following definitions apply:

10 (1) Applied behavior analysis. – The design, implementation, and evaluation of  
11 environmental modifications using behavioral stimuli and consequences to  
12 produce socially significant improvement in human behavior, including the  
13 use of direct observation, measurement, and functional analysis of the  
14 relationship between environment and behavior.

15 (2) Autism spectrum disorder. – Any of the pervasive developmental disorders  
16 or autism spectrum disorders as defined by the most recent edition of the  
17 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) or the most  
18 recent edition of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and  
19 Related Health Problems.

20 (3) Behavioral health treatment. – Counseling and treatment programs,  
21 including applied behavior analysis, that are both of the following:

22 a. Necessary to (i) increase appropriate or adaptive behaviors, (ii)  
23 decrease maladaptive behaviors, or (iii) develop, maintain, or restore,  
24 to the maximum extent practicable, the functioning of an individual.

25 b. Provided or supervised by (i) a Board Certified Behavior Analyst or  
26 (ii) a licensed psychologist or licensed psychological associate, so  
27 long as the services performed are commensurate with the  
28 psychologist's training and experience.

29 (4) Diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. – Any medically necessary  
30 assessments, evaluations, or tests to diagnose whether an individual has  
31 autism spectrum disorder.

32 (5) Health benefit plan. – As defined in G.S. 58-3-167, and including the State  
33 Health Plan for Teachers and State Employees established under Article 3B  
34 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes.



- 1           (6) Pharmacy care. – Medications prescribed by a licensed physician and any  
2           health-related services deemed medically necessary to determine the need  
3           for or effectiveness of the medications.
- 4           (7) Psychiatric care. – Direct or consultative services provided by a licensed  
5           psychiatrist.
- 6           (8) Psychological care. – Direct or consultative services provided by a licensed  
7           psychologist or licensed psychological associate.
- 8           (9) Therapeutic care. – Direct or consultative services provided by a licensed or  
9           certified speech therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, or  
10           licensed clinical social worker.
- 11           (10) Treatment for autism spectrum disorders. – Any of the following care or  
12           related equipment prescribed or ordered for an individual diagnosed with  
13           autism spectrum disorder by a licensed physician, a licensed psychologist, or  
14           a licensed clinical social worker who determines the care to be medically  
15           necessary:
- 16           a. Behavioral health treatment.
- 17           b. Pharmacy care.
- 18           c. Psychiatric care.
- 19           d. Psychological care.
- 20           e. Therapeutic care.
- 21           (b) Every health benefit plan shall provide coverage for the screening, diagnosis, and  
22           treatment of autism spectrum disorder. No insurer shall terminate coverage or refuse to issue,  
23           amend, or renew coverage to an individual solely because the individual is diagnosed with  
24           autism spectrum disorder or has received treatment for autism spectrum disorder.
- 25           (c) Coverage under this section may not be subject to any limits on the number of visits  
26           an individual may have for treatment of autism spectrum disorder.
- 27           (d) Coverage under this section may not be denied on the basis that the treatments are  
28           habilitative or educational in nature.
- 29           (e) Coverage under this section may be subject to co-payment, deductible, and  
30           coinsurance provisions of a health benefit plan that are not less favorable than the co-payment,  
31           deductible, and coinsurance provisions that apply to substantially all other medical services  
32           covered by the health benefit plan.
- 33           (f) This section shall not be construed as limiting benefits that are otherwise available  
34           to an individual under a health benefit plan.
- 35           (g) Coverage for behavioral health treatment under this section may be subject to a  
36           maximum benefit of up to seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) per year. After December  
37           31, 2014, the Commissioner of Insurance shall, on an annual basis, adjust the maximum benefit  
38           for inflation by using the Medical Care Component of the United States Department of Labor  
39           Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U). The Commissioner shall publish the  
40           adjusted maximum benefit no later than March 1 of each year, and the published adjusted  
41           maximum benefit shall apply to any health benefit plan year commencing on or after January 1  
42           of the following year. Payments made by an insurer on behalf of a covered individual for any  
43           care, treatment, intervention, service, or item other than behavioral health treatment shall not be  
44           applied toward any maximum benefit established under this section.
- 45           (h) Except for inpatient services, if an individual is receiving treatment for autism  
46           spectrum disorder, an insurer shall have the right to request a review of that treatment not more  
47           than once annually, unless the insurer and the individual's licensed physician or the individual's  
48           licensed psychologist agree that a more frequent review is necessary. Any such agreement  
49           regarding the right to review a treatment plan more frequently shall apply only to a particular  
50           insured being treated for an autism spectrum disorder and shall not apply to all individuals

1 being treated for an autism spectrum disorder by a physician or psychologist. The cost of  
 2 obtaining any review shall be borne by the insurer.

3 (i) This section shall not apply to plans that are certified as qualified health plans, as  
 4 defined in 45 C.F.R. § 155.20, if the requirements of this section are determined by the federal  
 5 government to require the State to make payments for a state-required benefit that is in excess  
 6 of the essential health benefits, pursuant to 45 C.F.R. § 155.170(a)(3). Nothing in this  
 7 subsection shall nullify the application of this section to plans that are not certified as qualified  
 8 health plans.

9 (j) This section shall not be construed as affecting any obligation to provide services to  
 10 an individual under an individualized family service plan, an individualized education program,  
 11 or an individualized service plan."

12 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 90-270.4 is amended by adding a new subsection to read as  
 13 follows:

14 "(f1) Nothing in this Article shall be construed to prevent a Board Certified Behavior  
 15 Analyst (BCBA) or a Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) from offering  
 16 services within the scope of practice authorized by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board,  
 17 including behavior analysis and therapy, in accordance with professional standards of the  
 18 BCBA or BCaBA's certification, if both of the following are true:

19 (1) The BCBA or BCaBA is properly certified and in good standing with the  
 20 Behavior Analyst Certification Board.

21 (2) The BCBA or BCaBA does not hold himself or herself out to the public by  
 22 any title or description stating or implying that the BCBA or BCaBA is a  
 23 psychologist or is licensed, certified, or registered to practice psychology in  
 24 this State."

25 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 135-48.51 reads as rewritten:

26 **"§ 135-48.51. Coverage and operational mandates related to Chapter 58 of the General**  
 27 **Statutes.**

28 The following provisions of Chapter 58 of the General Statutes apply to the State Health  
 29 Plan:

30 (1) G.S. 58-3-191, Managed care reporting and disclosure requirements.

31 (2) G.S. 58-3-192, Coverage for autism spectrum disorders.

32 ~~(2)~~(3) G.S. 58-3-221, Access to nonformulary and restricted access prescription  
 33 drugs.

34 ~~(3)~~(4) G.S. 58-3-223, Managed care access to specialist care.

35 ~~(4)~~(5) G.S. 58-3-225, Prompt claim payments under health benefit plans.

36 ~~(5)~~(6) G.S. 58-3-235, Selection of specialist as primary care provider.

37 ~~(6)~~(7) G.S. 58-3-240, Direct access to pediatrician for minors.

38 ~~(7)~~(8) G.S. 58-3-245, Provider directories.

39 ~~(8)~~(9) G.S. 58-3-250, Payment obligations for covered services.

40 ~~(9)~~(10) G.S. 58-3-265, Payment obligations for covered services.

41 ~~(10)~~(11) G.S. 58-3-280, Coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of  
 42 lymphedema.

43 ~~(11)~~(12) G.S. 58-3-285, Coverage for hearing aids.

44 ~~(12)~~(13) G.S. 58-50-30, Right to choose services of optometrist, podiatrist,  
 45 licensed clinical social worker, certified substance abuse professional,  
 46 licensed professional counselor, dentist, physical therapist, chiropractor,  
 47 psychologist, pharmacist, certified fee-based practicing pastoral counselor,  
 48 advanced practice nurse, licensed marriage and family therapist, or physician  
 49 assistant.

50 ~~(13)~~(14) G.S. 58-67-88, Continuity of care."

1           **SECTION 4.** Section 1 of this act becomes effective October 1, 2013, and applies  
2 to insurance contracts issued, renewed, or amended on or after that date. Section 3 of this act  
3 becomes effective January 1, 2014. The remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.