

DPW/DOS Behavior Specialist FAQ 11/27/12

The questions below have been received by the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and Department of State (DOS) regarding the Behavior Specialist license. This is a draft document and will be updated as appropriate. This document replaces the FAQs issued on 8/31/12.

License Questions

1. Who is required to obtain a Behavior Specialist license to receive payment through the Medical Assistance (MA) program?

An individual who provides what is currently described in Medical Assistance Bulletin 01-94-01 as behavioral specialist consultant services to a child with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) will need to obtain a Behavior Specialist license if they do not have a professional license whose scope of practice includes the diagnostic assessment or treatment of ASD.

2. When will DPW start requiring individuals to have a Behavior Specialist license or a professional license whose scope of practice includes the diagnostic assessment or treatment of ASD?

May 26, 2013

3. Does Act 62 apply to the MA program as well as private insurance?

Act 62 states that it applies to both health insurance policies and government programs and defines government programs as including the MA program.

4. I am a licensed psychologist who provides Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS). I currently have Behavioral Specialist Consultants (BSCs) working for me who are unlicensed. Will they need to obtain a Behavior Specialist license or will I be able to bill for services they provide?

If these individuals will be providing what is currently described in Medical Assistance Bulletin 01-94-01 as behavioral specialist consultant services to a child with ASD and they do not have a professional license whose scope of practice includes the diagnostic assessment or treatment of ASD, those individuals will need to obtain a Behavior Specialist license for you to bill MA for the services they provide.

5. Will an individual with a graduate degree in Special Education qualify as a Behavior Specialist?

The regulations issued by the Department of State identify a master's level degree with a major course of study in school, clinical, developmental or counseling psychology, special education, social work, speech therapy, occupational therapy, professional counseling, behavioral analysis, nursing or "another related field"

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as acceptable degrees for a Behavior Specialist. Specific licensure questions should be addressed to the State Board of Medicine (Board); however, be advised that the Board cannot pre-approve an application for a Behavior Specialist license. The Board can only rule on an individual's qualifications for licensure after a completed application has been submitted.

6. Can the Board tell me if I have the qualifications to be a licensed Behavior Specialist?

No. An individual's qualifications for licensure cannot be evaluated until all application materials have been received.

7. Must a master's level clinician who has a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) certification obtain a license?

If an individual with a BCBA certification does not have a license whose scope of practice includes the diagnostic assessment or treatment of ASD, the individual needs to obtain a Behavior Specialist license in order to receive payment through the MA program for services that are currently described in Medical Assistance Bulletin 01-94-01 as behavioral specialist consultant services to a child with ASD.

8. I am having difficulty obtaining verification from my graduate program that it includes the required minimum number of hours in the required subject areas for a Behavior Specialist license. What can I do?

Some individuals may find that their educational program will not verify the 90-hours of evidence-based coursework within the required content areas (e.g. 3 hours of Ethics, 16 hours of Assessment). An individual whose master's or higher degree or post-master's certificate was granted in one of the enumerated fields (see question 5) can supplement their education with Bureau of Autism Services (BAS)- or Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB)-approved coursework to meet the required minimum hours in the specified content areas. Form 5 of the Behavior Specialist license application provides information for meeting the specific minimum number of hours in the required content areas through approved trainings.

Individuals whose master's or higher degree or post-master's certificate was granted in "another related field" can either meet the 90-hours of evidence-based coursework requirement from courses taken within the master's or higher degree or post-master's certificate or through stand-alone continuing education courses that are BACB or BAS approved. Applicants whose degree or certificate was granted in "another related field" must submit a completed Form 6 of the Behavior Specialist license application.

9. Do unlicensed mental health professionals who work within a program such as a Summer Therapeutic Activities Program (STAP) or a partial hospitalization program need a license?

Unlicensed mental health professionals who work within a STAP, a partial hospitalization program, or a similar program are not required to obtain a license for the program to receive payment through the MA program.

Training Questions

1. How does my organization obtain approval from BAS for trainings my organization has developed?

To request approval from BAS for a training that your organization has developed, please email RA-BAStrainings@pa.gov and include "BSL Training Approval Request" in the subject line. BAS will email the guidelines for what courses will be approved, the instructions on how to obtain approval, and the forms that need to be completed to obtain approval.

This information, including the required form, is also currently posted to the ACT 62 Behavior Specialist License section of the BAS Virtual Training & Resource Center (VTC). To access the VTC, visit www.bastrainings.org and then follow the instructions for setting up a free master account.

Please note that BAS is currently only reviewing requests for approval submitted by the organization which provides the training. BAS is not currently reviewing requests submitted by individuals who attended the training.

2. Where can I find trainings that have been approved by BAS as counting towards the requirements for a Behavior Specialist license?

In order to be licensed as a Behavior Specialist an individual must complete 90 clock hours of coursework in evidence-based practices from an accredited college or university or training approved by the BACB or BAS.

BAS has posted the catalogue of approved courses and available virtual training courses in the VTC. Visit www.bastrainings.org to set up a free master account and to access the available courses. There is no cost for BAS courses. The catalogue and set of available trainings will be updated as additional resources are available.

3. What does BAS look at when it is considering whether to approve a training?

As required by the Board of Medicine regulations, the training must be "evidence-based." 18 Pa. Code § 18.524(d)(1). When determining if a training is evidence-

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based, BAS will consider whether the content is research-based and reflects accepted national standards. BAS will also determine if the training addresses at least one of the 8 areas of coursework or training required for a Behavior Specialist license. Information on each of the 8 areas of coursework or training an applicant must satisfy is in the attached document. BAS is currently developing a document that will include examples of trainings in each of the 8 areas.

4. BACB continuing education is awarded as CEU credits, rather than indicating specific clock hours. How will this translate into the required 90 hours of course work?

BACB awards CEU credits based on a minimum of 50 minutes of instruction, such that one CEU credit is given for each minimum 50-minute period. Therefore, for purposes of the 90 hours of course work requirement, 90 CEU credits are required to meet the requirement. For each BACB continuing education credit earned, an individual can submit for the equivalent number of licensure hours. For example, if an individual has documentation reflecting 1.5 BCBA CEUs, the credits can be applied toward 1.5 licensure hours.

5. Can the BAS training in Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) be applied toward the course work requirements for the Behavior Specialist license?

The FBA training can be applied toward 13 hours of the 16 hours required in the Assessment area. Individuals who have completed the FBA training should list Course Number AS203 on Form 5 of the Behavior Specialist license application, and submit proof of attendance and test completion.

6. What is considered acceptable FBA experience?

The regulations require “at least 1 year of experience involving functional behavior assessments of individuals under 21 years of age, including the development and implementation of behavioral supports or treatment plans.” 18 Pa.Code § 18.524(b). Experience implementing an FBA as a Therapeutic Staff Support worker can satisfy the requirement for experience involving FBA assessment. Experience can also be obtained providing services other than BHRS. Prior experience must be verified using Form 3 of the Behavioral Specialist license application.

7. How can I access the recorded/virtual trainings that have been developed by BAS that count towards the Behavior Specialist license training requirement?

Visit www.bastrainings.org to set up a master account and follow the instructions for connecting to the VTC. Once connected to the VTC, visit the ACT 62 Behavior Specialist License section.

Please note that BAS has now addressed the unanticipated technical glitches which delayed the availability of these courses. The VTC currently hosts the BSL Course Catalogue and approximately 70 free online BAS trainings that can be completed toward the licensure training requirements. A certificate of completion that includes the category or categories the training has been approved for, and the hours earned, will be generated for each of the online trainings completed. There is no cost to complete these courses.

8. Does BAS offer sufficient virtual or face-to-face trainings to meet all 90 hours of the training requirements for a Behavior Specialist license?

At this time, BAS has identified and posted approximately 70 free courses that can be completed toward the licensure requirements. Currently, the virtual trainings offered through the VTC fulfill some, but not all, of the minimum number of hours required in the 8 coursework areas. Additional virtual trainings provided by external organizations are being approved on an ongoing basis.

Past attendance in face-to-face training events may also qualify toward licensure. For example, many sessions held during BAS PA Autism Training Conferences and the 2012 Pennsylvania Department of Education National Autism Conference may count towards the number of hours of training required for licensure. Additionally, a number of previously held face-to-face trainings provided by external organizations have received BAS approval as counting toward licensure.

All BAS-approved trainings, face-to-face and virtual, are listed in the BAS-approved BSL Course Catalogue, along with the course number to be used on the application. As additional trainings become available, BAS will continue to update the BSL Course Catalogue of available approved trainings, both face-to-face and virtual, that are provided through BAS or other organizations.

Individuals who create a master account that is linked to the VTC will be sent updates as new trainings are available and an updated catalogue is posted.

Additional questions and responses will be added as appropriate

Additional questions can be emailed to DPW at RA-policyoffice@pa.gov
Questions related to training can be emailed to RA-BAStrainings@pa.gov
Questions related to licensing can be emailed to ST-MEDICINE@pa.gov