



pennsylvania

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Behavior Specialist Licensure

DPW Implementation Plan
General Stakeholder Web-Ex:
January 29, 2014



Important Notice:

Use the “chat” feature to raise questions

Phones will be muted throughout the presentation



Agenda

- Introduction
- Current Landscape
- Application/Licensing issues
- Bulletin, enrollment of Behavior Specialists
- Next steps



Today's presentation

- The context of today's presentation is limited to discussing the process of Behavior Specialist licensure and the BSC-ASD service



Today's Focus

- **Review common questions**
- **Provide an overview of the BSC-ASD service and enrollment of provider specialty type 558 (Behavior Specialist)**
- **Provide an update on next steps to include:**
 - Outreach & resources for colleges and universities
 - Activities to further address resources and best practice for new hires moving forward
 - Important deadlines



Current Landscape Board of Medicine Updates

- Currently reviewing applications submitted in December
- Applications submitted prior to December 31 have been reviewed and appropriate documentation (license or discrepancy letter) has been mailed
- Processing applications within a 30-60 day timeframe (up-to-date)



Current Landscape Board of Medicine Updates

- Currently reviewing information received in response to discrepancy letters within a 30-60 day timeframe
- Prioritizing the review of discrepancy information in order to complete application reviews and issue licenses

Current Board of Medicine data:

- **1254** licenses issued (1/28/14)
- **2806** applications received (1/24/14)
- **2776** applications with discrepancies



Current Landscape **Managed Care Organization Updates**

- Early reports by the MCO's estimated around 4000 BSCs are currently serving youth with ASD
- Staff surveys suggested approximately 400 staff would either not pursue licensure or ultimately would not be eligible for the behavior specialist license
- Reports from MCOs and discussions with the field indicate there is sufficient data to believe there will be an adequate number of qualified licensed staff to provide services within their networks
- Consistent monitoring and assessment of the BSC-ASD service will continue in addition to discussions regarding future hiring and capacity building



Current Landscape **What is in the Law**

- Act 62 established the minimum standards necessary to obtain licensure as a Behavior Specialist.
- Act 62 does not include a provision for the “grandfathering ” of experienced individuals or provider types.
- In accordance with the law, BCBAs need to obtain a license.



Current Landscape **What is in the Law**

- Act 62 does not include a provision for unlicensed individuals to provide and receive payment for services to children with autism while under the direction or supervision of an appropriately licensed individual.

In other words:

- The Act requires a person that is directly providing the service to be licensed.
- The Act does not include a provision for unlicensed staff.



Application

- Updates on the Process
- Review of the Application Process
- Review of Qualifications
- Additional Clarification



Application Expiration of clearances

The Board of Medicine is still accepting clearances, even if they've expired while the application was being processed, as long as they are an original. This has NOT yet changed.

An applicant should not submit a clearance that is older than 90 days with their initial application. Doing so may result in a discrepancy letter.

NOTICE: The Board will no longer accept clearances that have expired while the application is pending beginning **MAY 26, 2014**.

After May 26, 2014, for any application that is on file as pending, or for applications that are submitted after that date, clearances must be within 90 days.



Application Out-of-state Clearances

- Consistent with this policy and Act 62, with other fields that have similar requirements in their applications, clearances are required for any state where a person has resided within the last 10 years.
- If individuals are having difficulty getting original documentation from other states, then the Board of Medicine needs an official letter or other communication from that state explaining why the documentation is not able to be provided in an original format.



Questions regarding “other” qualified licenses

- Individuals who have a psychologist, LCSW, LSW or LPC or LMFT license do not have to obtain a BSL in order for MA to pay for BSC-ASD services.
- Other licensed professionals who believe the work of a Behavior Specialist is within their scope of practice should contact their respective licensing board for verification.



THE APPLICATION PROCESS

An application **SHOULD NOT** be submitted until the individual has obtained a Master's or Post-Master's certificate in either an approved field or a related field **AND** has the required Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and direct clinical experience.



Education



EDUCATION

Confusion regarding discrepancy letters or provisional denials based on applicants not having related educational backgrounds:

- **Master's Degree or Post-Master's Certificate is in a named field**
The qualifications for licensure include completion of a master's degree or higher degree, including a post-master's certificate in Behavioral Analysis; Special Education; Speech Therapy; Psychology (School, Clinical, Counseling or Developmental); Professional Counseling; Social Work; Occupational Therapy; Nursing; or a related field.
- **Master's Degree or Post-Master's Certificate is in a field related to a named field**



Previous instructions were provided for individuals who knowingly possessed a Master's Degree or Post-Master's Certificate that was NOT in either a "named field" or a "related field" to not submit an application.

In cases where the university are not able to verify that the individual's Master's degree or Post-Master's Certificate was in a related field, the individual is not be eligible for licensure until the individual obtains a Master's or Post-Master's in a named or related field.



Evidence-Based Coursework



90 HOURS OF EVIDENCE-BASED COURSEWORK, 8 CONTENT AREAS

- Professional Ethics (*3 hours*)
- Assessment Coursework Or Training (*16 hours*)
- Crisis Intervention (*8 hours*)
- Family Collaboration (*5 hours*)
- Autism-specific Coursework/Training (*18 hours*)
- Instructional Strategies & Best Practices (*16 hours*)
- Co-morbidity & Medications (*8 hours*)
- Addressing Specific Skill Deficits Training (*16 hours*)



VERIFICATION OF 90 HOURS OF EVIDENCE-BASED COURSEWORK

Every application must include verification that ALL 90 hours of evidence-based coursework have been completed.

These hours can be completed through:

- Accredited college/university coursework (undergraduate or graduate)
- BAS-approved supplemental trainings
- BACB Continuing Education
- OR a combination of these options



When the College/University determines that all 90 hours were fulfilled through the major course of study

- **No** additional coursework or trainings are required

When the College/University determines that the degree/post-graduate certificate is in a named or related field, but none or only some of the 90 hours/eight content areas were fulfilled through the major course of study, then:

- The applicant can fulfill the remaining content hours through additional coursework from an accredited college/university (undergraduate work acceptable), through BAS-approved trainings or BACB continuing education, OR any combination of these options



Degrees accepted by OMHSAS for individuals providing the BSC-ASD service

- Individuals providing BSC-ASD must hold a license in order to receive Medicaid payment.
- The license is what provides OMHSAS with the information that the graduate degree held is acceptable. OMHSAS will not review degrees separately from the license for BSC-ASD working with children with autism.



Supplemental Training



VERIFICATION OF SUPPLEMENTAL TRAININGS

All 90 hours of required training, fulfilling the 8 content areas, are available through BAS-approved virtual trainings.

- Form 5 verifying supplemental training documentation should NOT be submitted unless the **training has been pre-approved by the Bureau of Autism Services or for BCBA Continuing Education**, and the applicant is able to provide the supporting documentation.
- Only BCBAs should submit BACB continuing education documentation.



REMINDERS FOR DOCUMENTING BAS SUPPLEMENTAL TRAININGS

- **BAS Virtual Trainings**

If an applicant completes virtual trainings on the BAS Virtual Training Center (VTC), <http://bastraining.tiu11.org> the applicant can obtain a certificate of completion listing the Course Name, Course Number, and the number of hours awarded for each content area.

- **BAS Face-to-Face Trainings (FBA/Advanced FBA, PATC)**

If the certificates do not already including the BAS Course #, Content Area, and Hours Awarded, individuals should contact ra-bastrainings@pa.gov with the following information:

- Date/year of the FBA training or BAS conference
- FBA: Name of the FBA trainer and the location
- PATC: list of the keynote/breakout sessions attended
- If you provide attendance documentation received, it will expedite the process
- ***Current Timeframe: Approximately 2 weeks to process a request***



DOCUMENTING BAS-APPROVED TRAININGS PROVIDED BY OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Only trainings pre-approved by the BCBA or the Bureau of Autism Services should be submitted in support of the application.

- Applicants are still submitting non-approved trainings with their applications, which is creating discrepancies and unnecessary delays.
- THE BOARD OF MEDICINE DOES NOT EVALUATE COURSEWORK OR TRAININGS. ONLY SUBMIT SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION THAT COMPLIES WITH THE APPLICATION PROCEDURES.
- Regulations require all supplemental trainings to be BACB or BAS-approved. Any training that is not provided by the BCBA or a university authorized by BAS to offer pre-approved trainings, **MUST** go through the BAS approval process.



FBA and DIRECT CLINICAL EXPERIENCE



EXPERIENCE

FBA Experience

- At least 1 year of “experience” involving functional behavior assessments of individuals under 21 years of age
- Includes the development and implementation of behavioral supports or treatment plans
- For example, experience implementing an FBA by a Therapeutic Staff Support worker can be used to satisfy the requirement
- Experience can also be obtained **providing services outside of BHRS**
- Needs to be face-to-face
- Verification of experience does **not** need to be documented by the direct supervisor but must be verified by the agency



CLARIFICATION: FBA REQUIREMENTS

Any person who is conducting an FBA for a child with ASD as part of providing the BSC-ASD service must either:

- A) hold a Behavior Specialist License and have completed the BAS-approved FBA training, including passing the required post-test, or
- B) hold a Behavior Specialist License and be a BCBA.

In conclusion, an individual must meet training and qualification standards in order to receive Medicaid payment.



EXPERIENCE

Direct Clinical Experience

1,000 hours of direct clinical experience with individuals with behavioral challenges **OR**

1,000 hours of experience in a related field with individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

- Experience gained subsequent to obtaining the bachelor's degree can be counted toward meeting this requirement
- Employment or verified volunteer work as a teacher in an autistic support class, job coach, residential program manager or work experience provided in a summer therapeutic activities program provided to children or adults are other potential ways to meet experience requirements



EXPERIENCE

Direct Clinical Experience (cont.)

- Can be experience working with either children **OR** adults
- Verification of experience does not need to be documented by the direct supervisor but must be verified by the agency (supervisor is preferred)



EXPERIENCE: Additional Clarification from BOM Documenting FBA & Clinical Experience

- The Board of Medicine is looking to verify that the required number of months have been completed. Even if there was a break, the supervisor can verify the total, overall number of months completed—not counting any breaks.
- The forms should be signed by a supervisor, (current, past or retired) but if unavailable, someone who has direct knowledge of the experience the applicant has can sign the certification verifying that he or she can attest to the applicant's experience.
- No matter who completes the form, it must be sent directly to the Board of Medicine and not returned to the applicant.



Bulletin and Enrollment



Current Draft Bulletin

- OMHSAS has drafted a bulletin to notify licensed providers of their ability to enroll in the Medical Assistance (MA) program and be paid for providing BSC-ASD services to children with autism spectrum disorders.
- The bulletin applies to individuals who will be providing BSC-ASD in the Fee-for-Service (FFS) and the behavioral health managed care delivery systems.
- An outline of the service description format that must be submitted to the Children's Bureau is also provided.



Enrollment

- Licensed psychologists, licensed social workers, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists are not required to obtain a behavior specialist license in order to be eligible to enroll in the MA program to provide BSC-ASD services.
- Other licensed professionals may also be eligible to enroll in the MA program to provide BSC-ASD services if their licensing board determines that their scope of practice includes the diagnostic assessment or treatment of ASD.



Enrollment

- In addition to submitting an enrollment application, a provider must submit a service description to the Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services Children's Bureau. Service Descriptions can be submitted directly to RA-ServDescriptions@pa.gov
- The service description must be approved prior to the individual being able to bill for BSC-ASD services.



Enrollment, Provider Types

- Licensed behavior specialist, licensed social workers, licensed clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists who are enrolled in the MA program to provide BSC-ASD services will be assigned Provider Type 11, Specialty Type 558.
- Licensed psychologists who are enrolled in the MA program to provide BSC-ASD services will be assigned Provider Type 19, specialty Type 558.
- Existing BSC providers will have Specialty Type 558 added to their PROMISE file with an effective date of 5/26/14.



Enrollment, procedure codes

- Procedure code H0046 (HP) will be used to bill for BSC-ASD services provided directly by licensed psychologists.
 - The MA fee schedule rate for these services provided by a licensed psychologist is at a rate \$15.75 per quarter hour.
- Enrolled providers other than licensed psychologists will use procedure code H0046 (HO) to bill for BSC-ASD services.
 - The fee schedule rate for BSC-ASD services provided by licensed individuals other than psychologist, including licensed behavior specialist, is \$12.25 per quarter hour.



Enrollment

- Licensed behavior specialists and other licensed individuals whose scope of practice includes the diagnostic assessment or treatment of ASD may also work for an approved BHRS provider and do not need to enroll directly in the MA program to provide BSC-ASD services.
- Enrolled providers are responsible for ensuring that all staff who provide BSC-ASD services are appropriately licensed.



Moving Forward

- Service delivery expectations
- Licensure renewal
- Licensure credentials
- Outreach to colleges and universities



May 26, 2014

**The date by which staff providing BSC-ASD
must be licensed in order to receive MA
payment**



Service Delivery Expectations

- The Department, in collaboration with the HealthChoices Contractors, will continue to monitor the provision of BSC and BSC-ASD services to ensure there are no capacity issues and appropriate services are being provided.
- The HealthChoices Program is permitted to establish standards above the minimum qualifications established by the state.



Additional Expectations

- ▼ Transition planning should occur in all cases where there will be a staff change.
- ▼ The Department does not expect there to be a disruption in service during the transition time of 5/26/13-5/26/14 due to the flexibility afforded to the MCOs.
- ▼ In addition, the Department does not expect there to be a disruption in service after 5/26/14 given that the service delivery system has had over a year to plan for any transitions that may be needed.



Licensure Renewal: \$75 fee

Regardless of when a license is issued, the behavior specialist license expires on December 31 of the even-numbered year unless renewed for the next biennium.

Renewal notices will be mailed to the address on file for each active licensee approximately **120 days prior to the December 31, 2014** expiration date. Instructions regarding the renewal process will be provided in the renewal notice when sent.

To retain licensure as a behavior specialist, the licensee shall renew the license in the manner prescribed by the Board and pay the required biennial renewal fee specified in regulations prior to the expiration of the current biennium.

No additional training hours or forms are needed for renewal. It is a simple online process.



Licensure Credentials

- Many individuals have begun to use “LBS” as the credentialing to designate a licensed behavior specialist
- Information regarding expected terminology associated with the licensure of this profession was not specified in the behavior specialist law/regulations.
- Therefore, neither DPW nor the Board of Medicine is able to determine or recommend what credentials a licensed behavior specialist uses.



Hiring of future staff

- Concerns about the lack of appropriately qualified staff or the relatively few licensed behavior specialist may be lessened as the BOM currently is maintains a 4-6 wk timeframe for reviewing and responding to applications.
- To maximize the pool of professionals eligible for licensure, individuals should ensure they are counting any direct experience gained subsequent to obtaining their bachelor's degree. This includes working with either children or adults.
- Additionally, individuals should count any activities related to the implementation of an FBA provided to an individual under the age of 21 (not just the actual conducting of an FBA) towards the criteria for licensure.



Hiring of future staff

- DPW will continue to collaborate with stakeholders to develop strategies to increase the number of license-eligible applicants entering the field.
 - Strategies may include ways for providers to have unlicensed staff gain the necessary experience and training requirements to meet the necessary criteria for licensure.
- DPW will continue to collaborate with stakeholders in establishing potential career pathways to assist unlicensed staff to navigate the licensure process, including both paraprofessional staff and staff without related educational backgrounds, seeking to obtain the related master's degree or post-master certificate necessary for licensure.



University/College Outreach

DPW is currently developing guidelines for universities for both short-term and long-term purposes:

1. Guidelines that applicants can use when first contacting universities, or to use when addressing discrepancies. The information includes context about ACT 62, guidelines on evaluating coursework using the content area descriptions, instructions on completing the forms, and other tips for applicants to use when communicating with universities, based on experiences (both positive and negative) from the initial implementation phase.
2. Communication around ACT 62's training and experience requirements, in an effort to encourage universities to modify or develop programs that ensure that graduates have the qualifications to obtain a license upon graduation.



Next Steps

- Future DPW trainings as needed
- Ongoing Technical Assistance



RESOURCES

This Power Point will be available in the near future at the following link.

Additional resources regarding the behavior Specialist license can be found at:

http://www.parecovery.org/services_bhrs.shtml



Questions??



Questions submitted by the audience

Q: Do individuals have to be licensed to work with youth on the Spectrum if the ASD diagnosis is not primary?

A: *If a staff person is providing the BSC-ASD service to youth under the age of 21 with an ASD diagnosis they must be licensed regardless of if the diagnosis is primary.*

Q: Will mobile therapists providing “Expanded Mobile Therapy”, “MT only” or “Brief Treatment MT” services need to be licensed?

A: *OMHSAS has established that professionals providing the BSC-ASD service must be appropriately licensed. BHMCO’s are permitted to set qualification standards beyond the minimum requirements established by OMHSAS as part of the management of their network. Please speak with a representative from your BHMCO regarding any potential changes to their network’s credentialing standards.*



Q: What happens to individuals who may have missed the January 1, 2014 deadline to submit completed applications for individuals providing BSC services to children with ASD?

A: *Individuals should apply for licensure as they become eligible. For existing staff who wish to continue providing BSC services to children with ASD (now referred to as BSC-ASD), each BHMCO has established a process to address those individuals that did not meet the 1/1/2014 application deadline as outlined in their status plan. Check with your BHMCO about the missed application deadline and the ability those staff to continue billing for the BSC-ASD service.*

Q: What is the “true effective date” for licensure?

A: *In order to receive payment through the Medical Assistance program for providing BSC-ASD services to children with ASD, the individual providing the service must be appropriately licensed by May 26, 2014.*



Q: Will licenses and certifications from other states be accepted in order to provide and bill for BSC-ASD services to a child with ASD?

A: *No, licenses and certificates from other states will not be accepted.*

Q: As a licensed psychologist who provides BHRS, can I employ unlicensed individuals to provide BSC-ASD services and bill under my MA ID number or will they need to obtain a behavior specialist license?

A: *The individual providing the BSC-ASD service will need to be licensed in order to seek MA reimbursement.*



Q: Does a person have to be licensed as a behavior specialist AND be a BCBA in order to conduct FBAs?

A: *In order to conduct an FBA as part of the BSC-ASD service for a child with autism he/she must either:*

- 1) hold a Behavior Specialist License **and** have completed the BAS-approved FBA training, including passing the required post-test, **OR***
- 2) hold a Behavior Specialist License **and** be a BCBA.*

Q: Does the FBA experience have to be a child with ASD?

A: *FBA experience, as defined by the Behavior Specialist regulations, involves "at least one 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." The law does not specify that it needs to be a child with ASD.*



Q: Does Act 62 apply to the Adult Autism Waiver or ACAP?

A: *No, Act 62 only applies to individuals under the age of 21.*

Q: Who will be responsible for supervising TSS from a provider agency if there is an independently licensed and enrolled BS providing BSC-ASD service to a child?

A: *Although the professional who develops and implements a behavior plan will likely maintain some oversight and input throughout the treatment process, the agency who employs the TSS ultimately is responsible for ensuring that the TSS receive the required clinical and administrative supervision, delivered by appropriately qualified individuals according to the MA 01-01-05 bulletin.*