



SECTION 2: **AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER AND APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS**

1 What is ASD?

ASD is characterized by varying degrees of difficulty in social interaction and verbal and nonverbal communication, and the presence of repetitive behavior and/or restricted interests.² Due to the variability and symptom presentation, no two individuals with an ASD diagnosis are the same with respect to how the disorder manifests and its impact on families. Because of the nature of the disorder, people with ASD often will not achieve the ability to function independently without appropriate medically necessary treatment.

2 What is ABA?

ABA is a well-developed scientific discipline among the helping professions that focuses on the analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation of social and other environmental modifications to produce meaningful changes in human behavior. ABA includes the use of direct observation, measurement, and functional analysis of the relations between environment and behavior. ABA uses changes in environmental events, including antecedent stimuli and consequences, to produce practical and significant changes in behavior. These relevant environmental events are usually identified through a variety of specialized assessment methods. ABA is based on the fact that an individual's behavior is determined by past and current environmental events in conjunction with organic variables such as their genetic endowment and physiological variables. Thus, when applied to ASD, ABA focuses on treating the problems of the disorder by altering the individual's social and learning environments.

The current guidelines are specific to ABA as a behavioral health treatment of ASD. Nevertheless, ABA has also been demonstrated as effective for treating the symptoms of a variety of conditions, including severe destructive behavior, substance abuse, dementia, pediatric feeding disorders, traumatic brain injury, among others.

The successful remediation of core deficits of ASD, and the development or restoration of abilities, documented in hundreds of peer-reviewed studies published over the past 50 years, has made ABA the standard of care for the treatment of ASD (see Appendix B).