



Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) Parent Tip Sheet



Sourcing Funding for your ABA Program

This package contains information on:

- Available funding.
- Types of funding.
- Funding bodies.

Learn how to access funding for your child

- Through the HCWA initiative.
- Through Medicare.

Check out ...

- Our funding overview diagram on Page 2.
- Information about Service Panel Providers on Page 4.



Funding Your ABA Programme

Overview

Congratulations on choosing ABA as a method to support your child's care and development.

The upside of ABA is the evidence-base of the practice, supported by 50 years academic research. The downside is that no *one* body or organisation will fully fund your ABA programme. We know this initially sounds discouraging. However, there are a number of bodies and pools of funding that can be accessed to assist with implementation and application of ABA for your child.

Detailed information about the various funding bodies and opportunities is provided in the remainder of this document. Below, for your quick reference is a visual overview of all options. Use the overview to guide you quickly to the information you're seeking, or read the document in full to understand all options.

Text written like this means please pay attention, there's something important we're saying.

We trust the information provided will help you understand all your funding options.

ABIA General Manager
Susie Pavey
July 2014





Primary Funding Source

Helping Children with Autism Package

Since 2008 the Federal Government has specifically recognized autism as a disorder that adversely affects children in their formative years. As a result, the Department of Social Services (formerly FaHCSIA)¹ provides funding of \$12,000 per diagnosed child through their *Helping Children with Autism* (HCWA) initiative. This is the largest pool of funds offered for autism families and the general start point for funding assistance.

Rather than ABA-specific, HCWA funding is available to any child with an autism diagnosis. It is accessed through a State or Territory approved Autism Advisor (*Amaze* in Victoria), and must be used for approved Early Intervention services. Funding must be applied for before your child's 6th birthday, and expended before their 7th birthday. Funding under this program is capped at \$6,000 per financial year. **Families living in Outer Regional, Remote or Very Remote² areas are able to access an additional \$2,000 under this program over a two year period.** This extra funding recognises additional and extraordinary costs incurred due to geography. It acknowledges that many professionals are located in major city centres and families will often need to travel to gain access.

As the parent of a diagnosed child you will receive a Letter of Introduction from an Autism Advisor. You will need to make an appointment with an Autism Advisor to access HCWA funding. In Victoria, the Autism Advisor program is located at *Amaze*, telephone 1300 424 499. The Autism Advisor will need a number of documents from the list below. We suggest you contact an Advisor prior to your appointment:

- Letter of Diagnosis from Paediatrician
- Autism diagnostic assessment report
- Completed HCWA application form
- Your Medicare number
- Treatment plan for the child (either recommendations included in their assessment report, or the plan made with the paediatrician through Medicare item 135); and
- Centrelink Customer Reference Number (CRN), displayed on your HealthCare Card.

Once you have met with an Autism Advisor and began to access funding you will receive a monthly Family Activity Statement. This is helpful because it advises how much funding you have spent to date, and how much remains.

¹ FaHCSIA is the Department of Families and Housing, Community Services, and Indigenous Affairs. References to FaHCSIA funding means funding provided through the *Helping Children With Autism* package.

² To understand if you qualify as Outer Regional, Remote, Very Remote go to <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/orr-and-access-support-payment-guide-december-2013>.



Families using ABA can use HCWA funds for:

- ABA program supervision.
- ABA training.
- ABA therapy (providing you have chosen a Service Provider that directly employs therapists).

To regulate service provision—and to ensure Australian families receive beneficial and credible services—the Federal Government has developed a panel of approved Early Intervention Service Providers. Autism panel providers are consortiums of health professionals, including speech pathologists, psychologists, occupational therapists, and ABA providers who provide multidisciplinary educational and behavioural interventions. The importance of panel providers is that panel registration means they have satisfied the following criteria:

- They deliver eligible evidence-based interventions or therapies;
- They can demonstrate how their service will be delivered through an individual service plan;
- They can demonstrate principles of good practice in early intervention; and
- They can demonstrate in detail how their service will provide elements of effective interventions for children with autism.

Panel Service Providers bill the Department of Social Services direct which means families do not have to pay up-front or wait for rebates.

Before booking any autism service, check you are dealing with a registered autism panel provider. This saves a lot of heartache later on, and ensures your limited funding is used effectively. At the time of compiling this document, some 324 Victorian government-approved Service Providers are listed. The full list of Victorian panel providers can be found at www.amaze.org.au/panel or on the Department of Social Service's website <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/helping-children-with-autism/providers>.

The HCWA table indicates eligibility of interventions for funding under the HCWA package. You will see that ABA gets the top rating of 'ER' – which means eligible for funding based on Established Research. A copy of the table can be viewed at http://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/disability-and-carers/hcwa_tables.pdf.

Access to a list of Victorian ABA Service Providers is provided as part of membership with our organisation. Family membership costs just \$55 per annum and comes with a range of benefits including access to our ABA/autism resource library, regular e-alerts about industry and ABA happenings, and reduced training and conference fees. For your convenience, a membership application form is attached to this tip sheet or can be downloaded at <http://www.abia.net.au/images/2014-abia-membership.pdf>.

For further information about the HCWA initiative visit <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/helping-children-with-autism>



Secondary Funding Sources

Medicare

There are three main options through Medicare for offsetting costs of Early Intervention Services: *The Chronic Disease Management Plan*; the *Better Access to Mental Health Plan*; and *The Helping Children with Autism Access to Diagnosis and Treatment Plan*. This funding is broadly available, rather than ABA-specific.

Please note, under these plans you get partial rebates rather than up-front payments.

The number of therapy sessions and the types of therapies applicable are different under each initiative. Table 1.1 below divulges families options clearly. We are grateful to the Autism Advisor Team at *Amaze* for allowing us to reproduce this table

	The Chronic Disease Plan ¹	The Better Access Plan ²	The Helping Children Plan ³
No of sessions	5	10 individual +10 group	20
Frequency	Per calendar year	Per calendar year	One-off item ⁴
Speech Therapist	✓		✓
Psychologist	✓	✓	✓
Occupational Therapist	✓	✓	✓
Social Worker	✓	✓	✗
Audiologist	✓	✗	✓
Optometrist	✗	✗	✓
Orthoptist	✗	✗	✓
Physiotherapist	✓	✗	✓
Groups Sessions	✗	✓	✗
GPs write referral	✓	✓	✗
Paediatrician write referral	✗	✓	✓
Psychiatrist write referral	✗	✓	✓
Adult eligibility	✓	✓	✗

1:Chronic Disease Management Plan. 2:Better Access to Mental Health Plan. 3: Helping Children with Autism Access to Treatment (not to be confused with the HCWA initiative). 4: Paediatrician must write referral by child's 13th birthday; sessions must be used by 15th birthday.

Referrals to the **Chronic Disease Management plan** *must* be written by a GP. This program provides limited Medicare rebates for individuals with a chronic condition—defined as persisting for more than six months—which qualifies autism.



Referrals to the **Access to Mental Health plan** can be written by a paediatrician or psychiatrist, but are more commonly provided by GPs. This initiative provides for rebates for individuals with a mental health concern (e.g. depression, anxiety, conduct disorder, attention deficit disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, sleep disorders). Some children with an autism diagnosis will present with these conditions. Given the all-encompassing effects of autism some parents will obtain a Mental Health Plan for themselves as well as their child.

More information about psychology and Medicare rebates is available from: <http://www.psychology.org.au/medicare/>

Referrals to the **Helping Children with Autism plan** must be written by a paediatrician or psychiatrist. Often referred to as Item 135, this plan is provided for families of children under 13 years of age with a diagnosis of Pervasive Developmental Disorder (Autism, Asperger Syndrome, PDD-NOS, Rett's Disorder, or Childhood Disintegrative Disorder). The plan enables rebates to a total of 20 sessions from Allied Health Providers (i.e. Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Psychologist). Families who opt to do ABA regularly use this plan to reduce their ABA program costs (i.e. psychology fees).

Under this plan the 20 sessions are provided as a once-off measure for each child (i.e. not per-calendar year like other Medicare rebates). Rebates-per-session are specified and parents are advised to contact Medicare to understand the current rebate amount for the individual treatment.

To access this funding plan families must visit their paediatrician or child psychiatrist to develop a treatment plan. The plan will include how many sessions with each type of allied health provider (remember it's 20 sessions in total). The preferred service provider must be specified in the plan.

Families can access all three plans simultaneously.

Further information about available Medicare items and their usage can be found at: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/autism-children>

Other

Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS) enables individuals to access financial rebates for counselling related to mental health concerns such as depression or anxiety. A maximum of 12 sessions per calendar year are available: six time-limited sessions with an option for a further six sessions following a mental health review by the referring GP. Sessions can be individual and/or group therapy sessions. ATAPS provides patients with assistance for short-term intervention. If further sessions are required it may mean that the patient needs a longer term program to meet his/her needs.

In exception circumstances an additional six individual focussed psychological strategies services above those already provided (up to a maximum total of 18 individual services per patient per calendar year) may be made available. **Exceptional circumstances** are defined as a significant change in the patient's clinical condition or care circumstances which make it appropriate and necessary to increase the maximum number of services.



Through ATAPS, patients are also eligible for up to 12 separate group therapy services, within a calendar year, involving 6-10 patients. These group services are separate from the individual services and do not count towards the 12 individual mental health services in a calendar year.

ATAPS recognises psychologists using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) as a treatment approach. However, they must be recognised by the local division of general practice (for GPs). In some cases fees are subsidised, or fully funded by the division, to allow low income clients to access the treatment sessions free of charge. For this reason it is helpful if the referring GP is located in same area as the service provider.

The ATAPS scheme is no longer publicised, however, it still exists and can be accessed according to guidelines. Speak to your GP to determine if ATAPS is applicable to your circumstance.

Please note, ATAPS is an alternative to the Better Access to Mental Health Plan. Both systems cannot be accessed at the same time.

For more information about this scheme please visit the Department of Health website: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/mental-boimhc-ataps>

Brokerage Funding

Brokerage describes a system of funding supports where an agency (such as BaptCare) coordinates the purchase of services and supports, or resources, on the behalf of the approved applicant.

Brokerage funding may be useful in reducing the cost of resources for your ABA program. To step you though the application process, contact your area agency and discuss your needs with an intake worker. To find out about packages through brokerage agencies, contact the local administering agency in your area as per the instructions below:

- Go to www.acd.org.au
- Click on Information and Support for Families
- Click on Regional Quick Guides
- Click on the rural or metropolitan area covering your local government area (eg. Eastern Metropolitan if you live in the municipality of Knox, Barwon-South Western if you live in the municipality of Greater Geelong, etc.)
- Look for Disability Services and Early Childhood Services and find the contact numbers for relevant agencies.

Brokerage funding packages are generally limited to \$500. Applications are assessed periodically and are generally paid to the provider of the goods or service rather than the applicant/family. Agencies are limited by available funds and may need to prioritise eligible applications. Keep this in mind if applying for a priority item.



Note: The definition of disability needed to access these packages sometimes includes intellectual disability and sensory disability. This often precludes individuals diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome. While some agencies are flexible enough to offer assistance to this group, others aren't or won't. Please talk to your local agency to clarify whether they can help. Under the new DSM-V diagnosis Aspergers is subsumed under autism which should make it easier to apply for funding.

Early Childhood Intervention Services (ECIS)

The ECIS flexible funding package provides funding of up to \$5,000 for goods and services to support children with a disability who are below school age. In exceptional cases, a greater amount may be granted.

ECIS funding criteria requires that a child must be eligible to attend an early intervention program. This means the child has developmental delays in at least two areas (e.g. communication, social skills, play skills, physical skills). All children diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder meet this criteria.

Under this package, the following supports can be funded:

- Therapy services such as speech pathology, psychology, and occupational therapy.
- Physical aides and equipment.
- Additional respite care.

In short, a family embarking on an ABA program may wish to apply for funds for sessions with their Program Supervisor; or for equipment such as computer software, a digital camera or laminator.

The application process involves writing up a support plan for the child showing the required services and goods, and how these will assist the child. The application also requires costing the items and identifying which requested items are family priorities, as these would then be funded first, and granted over and above other requests.

To apply, follow these steps:

- If you are involved in a government funded Early Intervention program ask staff about assisting you with an application.
- If you are not involved in an Early Intervention program but have a speech pathologist, occupational therapist, or psychologist assisting you they may be able to help with an application.
- If you are not involved with any of the above services, contact Early Childhood Intervention Services (part of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development). They will clarify your eligibility and can assist with making an application for an ECIS flexible funding package.
- If there are delays through this avenue you may wish to directly contact the administering agency in your region.

For further information call 1800 783 783 and ask for Early Childhood Intervention Services. Or use the number pertinent to your area (see table next page):



Northern Metropolitan Region 03 9304 075	Barwon Region 1800 354 605
Southern Metropolitan Region 1300 720 151	Gippsland Region 1800 336 010
Eastern Metropolitan Region 1300 662 655	Grampians Region 03 5330 8608 03 5330 8613
Western Metropolitan Region 03 9275 7500	Hume Region 1800 627 391
	Loddon Mallee Region 1300 363 514

Centrelink

Carer Allowance: a fortnightly payment of \$118.20 per fortnight (not means tested) for the carers of child with a disability (including Autistic Disorder and Asperger Syndrome). This allowance can be back-paid for a specified time-period prior to claim. The Carer Allowance is used by some Centrelink payments and agencies (such as Victorian [Carer Card](#)) to confirm eligibility for their programs.

Carer Payment: income and assets-tested for parents of a child with severe disability.

Carer Adjustment Payment: a one-off, non-taxable payment of up to \$10,000 to assist families to adjust following a catastrophic event (e.g. child diagnosed with a severe illness or medical condition, or a major disability such as Autism Spectrum Disorder). Applicants must not be eligible for Carer Payment or other income support payments.

For further information about Centrelink payments we recommend you call 13 2717 or refer to: <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/payments-for-carers>

Health Care Card

This government provided card helps with the cost of:

- prescription medicine under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme
- Australian government funded medical services, and
- access to State, Territory and local government concessions.

You will be automatically issued a Health Care Card if you are an Australia resident and you qualify for the Carer Payment, Carer Allowance, Special Benefit, Family Tax Benefit (Part A), Newstart Allowance, Sickness Allowance or if you are a Low Income Earner.

For further information <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/health-care-card>.



Victorian Carer Card

This card provides discounts and benefits. It is a collaboration between the government, businesses and the community and its purpose is recognition, understanding, and support to Victorian carers.

Apart from discounts, cardholders are entitled to free public transport on a Sunday, plus two annual, return, off-peak travel vouchers.

For further information, 1800 901 958 or <http://carercard.vic.gov.au>.

Childcare Benefit and Rebate (CCB)

CCB is a Federal Government payment through Centrelink, which contributes to the costs of childcare. Our experience is that some families utilise this for payment towards ABA therapy costs (i.e. therapist wages).

There are two types of care recognised for Childcare Benefit: Approved Care and Registered Care.

Approved Care is care provided by services such as established childcare centres and In-Home Care (which will be discussed later).

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit>

Registered Care provided by individuals who are registered with Centrelink as carers. It can include care provided by grandparents, relatives, friends, or nannies. In some cases, it can include care provided by individuals in private preschools, kindergartens, and some outside school hour services including before and after school care, and vacation care

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/child-care-benefit>

The rate of CCB for Registered Care is a specified flat rate per hour of \$0.684 per child and is not means or assets tested. It might appear at first glance to be a small contribution to program costs, however, for 40 hours of therapy per week over 52 weeks for one child (increases for multiple children), it works out to be a rebate of over \$1,400.

To be eligible for CCB for Registered Care parents must be participating in work or work-related activities (such as training or studying) at some time during the week that care is used. If you receive a Carer Allowance for your child, you are deemed to satisfy the work requirement (this should be all parents of children with ASD!). Children must be up-to-date with their immunisations to access this funding.

Here's how to utilise Registered Care for ABA therapy:

1. Have your therapist complete an application to be a registered childcare provider. This involves contacting the Family Assistance Office on 13 6150 and requesting the Registered Childcare Provider Application Form. The form is one page and easy to complete. Applicants do not have to meet any training pre-requisites or other requirements besides the carer being over 18 years of age. It is also a requirement that the carer meet Victorian licensing requirements where the carer is looking after five or more children. This will of course not apply to an ABA therapist.



2. Have your therapist issue you with a receipt for childcare hours (therapy). Therapists can obtain a free booklet with receipt templates in it from the Family Assistance Office.
3. Claim the rebate from Centrelink. This can be done online or by contacting the family assistance office on 13 6150 and asking for a Child Care Benefit claim form to be posted to you (or you can pick up a claim form at any Family Assistance or Centrelink office). You can save receipts and do a bulk claim, so long as the claim is made within 12 months of the date of the care. You can find the form here: <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/spw/customer/forms/resources/fa019-1407en.pdf>

In-Home Care (IHC) is a registered form of Approved Care. It is provided by a network of commercial and not-for-profit organisations across Australia. In-Home Care caters for families who would otherwise have difficulty in accessing appropriate childcare in the family's home. Eligibility criteria is set by the Federal Department of Education and it includes families where a child or parent has a disability.

Parents of children with ASD may qualify for the service. The benefit of using In-Home Care is that services are approved for the purposes of Childcare Benefit (see explanation above), and the Childcare Rebate. Families need to contact the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) to check their eligibility for CCB and CCR.

CCB, if available, is provided on a sliding scale based on family income. **CCR, if available, is capped at \$7,500 per child per year.** If there is more than one child in care, all children are eligible to receive the rebate. <https://education.gov.au/information-approved-home-care-providers-0>

CCB for ABA

Families may be able to have their ABA therapist(s) employed by, or registered as, a carer with the IHC service provider. An alternative may be training the service's carer in ABA via our Level 1 ABA Therapist Training course. This is a childcare service and carers need to provide the care in the home with appropriate child-focussed excursions allowed. Consultation of each child's care needs and behavioural plans should be discussed with the carer.

To find In-Home Care services in your area visit the National In-Home Childcare Association (NICA), <http://www.nica.org.au> or the Federal Government's My Child website <http://www.mychild.gov.au/sites/mychild>.

Suggested steps to follow:

1. Check with the IHC service that you are eligible and that they have a vacancy.
2. Explain that you have a child who has ASD and complex needs, and you wish to use IHC.
3. Advise that you have a carer who is familiar with your child and your child's complex needs (i.e. your ABA therapist) and ask if it's possible for this carer to register with the service. Depending on how the IHC service operates, the therapist may need to have an ABN, plus basic first aid and CPR training. If the therapist registers with the IHC service, their pay becomes a taxable income, so any rate of pay you have negotiated with them may need to be revised.



Limitations of In-Home Care

Childcare services that offer In-Home Care are limited by the number of positions made available by the Federal Government. Consequently, an eligible family may not be able to receive it, or hours available may be limited.

In-Home Care is *childcare*, consequently it's guided by the [DEEWR Interim Standards](#) for In-Home Care and the service's policies relating to the implementation of the standards. As with other schemes you may need to promote to the IHC service provider how using ABA in an In-Home Care setting is a marriage of the standards and your requirements. Standard 8 designates that "*In-Home carers must possess appropriate knowledge, skills and experience*". Some IHC services may require qualifications such as Certificate III in Children's services. You may need to discuss with the IHC service the significant advantages to your family and child of targeted behavioural interventions (by the carer) over and above regular children's services qualifications. For more information check out the link below:

http://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/interim_standards_for_in_home_care_funding_agreement_requirements.pdf

Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS)

This is a subsidy paid to approved childcare services, including out of school hours care and holiday programs, so they can provide extra care for children with special needs. Not all children with additional needs will get this support. Your childcare service will need to apply through their Inclusion Support Facilitator. For further information about this service please view the Department of Education website: <http://education.gov.au/inclusion-and-professional-support-program>.

Kindergarten Inclusion Support Subsidy (KISS)

KISS packages support children with disabilities and complex needs in State Government funded kindergarten programs in two ways:

- Packages of support for children with severe disabilities to enhance their access and participation in kindergarten; and
- Support from specialist early childhood staff known as Preschool Field Officers (PSFO).

The objective of Kindergarten Inclusion Support Packages is to build the capacity of funded kindergartens to support the access and participation of children. KISS is available in addition to the existing resources available to kindergarten staff, but may not provide full coverage of all costs.

Download the pack and funding information on KISS at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/pages/kinderinclusion.aspx>



Other

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

The NDIS is a new national insurance scheme designed to deliver funding to people with significant and permanent disabilities. It is anticipated that by 2019 the NDIS will supersede the HCWA initiative. It is unknown at this stage how other initiatives, such as the many mentioned in this document, will be impacted.

The key change with the NDIS is that funding will be provided either in cash or as a plan with a specific and agreed cash value. The funding will be provided direct to the person with the disability (or their nominee).

The second major change is that funding under the NDIS is not based on diagnosis, but assessed via a government-created tool. This tool assesses the impact of a person's disability on their daily life. There is concern that high-functioning ASD children may not be admitted to the NDIS. At this early (trial) stage it's a matter of wait and see. One ABA Service Provider is currently operating in an NDIS trial area and our organisation is maintaining regularly contact with them about funding arrangements. To date, we understand that ABA families in these areas have received up to \$16,000 per annum. However, the amount of funding will depend on your child's individual plan and discussions with your NDIS case manager. It is not a blanket rule. We will provide further updates on this via our member e-alerts as more becomes known.

The NDIS trial areas now number seven including: the Hunter (NSW), Barwon (VIC), South Australia (for children under six years of age), Tasmania (for young people, aged 15 to 24 years), and most recently the whole of the ACT, Barkly in the Northern Territory, and Perth Hills in Western Australia.

Members of ABIA will be kept up-to-date with NDIS happenings and outcomes via e-alerts. At this early stage of roll-out it really is a matter of wait and see.

ABA Parent Support Network

One of the best ways to learn about funding for ABA (and autism) is to talk to other parents. Feedback from members is that they have found out about options they otherwise wouldn't have known about, simply through conversation. The ABA Parent Support Network was established for this reason. The network is a group of parents who are all doing ABA. They meet regularly, generally socially over dinner, to share their autism and ABA triumphs and challenges.

To join the ABA Parent Support Network email abaparentnetwork@gmail.com and ask to be added to our Facebook group. To protect members' privacy the group is set as *secret*, so only members can access the group and connect with participants.



Helpful Links

Autism Behavioural Intervention Association
www.abia.net.au

ABA Parent Support Network
abaparentnetwork@gmail.com

The Raising Children Network Autism Website
www.raisingchildren.ent.au/autism and specifically the link below to access information about autism and financial support
http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/autism_spectrum_disorder_financial_support.html

Amaze
www.amaze.org.au

Carers Victoria
<http://www.carersvictoria.org.au/>

National Disability Insurance Scheme
www.ndis.gov.au

FaHCSIA provider list
<http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/program-services/for-people-with-disability/helping-children-with-autism/providers>.

Centre Link
<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/payments-for-carers>

Medicare
<http://www.psychology.org.au/medicare/>

Healthcare Card
<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/health-care-card>.

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