



Autism Behavioural Intervention | **ABIA**
ASSOCIATION

APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS (ABA) FUNDING GUIDE



SOURCING FUNDING FOR YOUR ABA PROGRAM

Funding an ABA Program

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 nearly 50 years of academic research. The downside is that no *one* body or organisation will fully fund your ABA program. 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.

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

ABIA General Manager
Susie Pavey
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Primary Funding Source

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS)

The NDIS is currently rolling out across Australia and is replacing the *Helping Children with Autism* (HCWA) initiative. If your child is aged 0-6 years, you will meet with an NDIS early childhood partner. In this meeting, you will discuss your child's needs and goals. During this discussion you'll need to substantiate your child's 'permanent and significant disability or developmental delay,' to support your request for assistance. If you are currently a recipient of HCWA funding, you will receive a letter then a phone call from an NDIS representative to plan your transition to the NDIS.

The NDIS funds "reasonable and necessary support" that helps your child reach his or her goals in a range of areas. To be considered reasonable and necessary, support must be:

- related to your child's disability
- value for money
- likely to work and benefit your child
- based on evidence

NDIS-funded support might include therapeutic support including behaviour support therapies, technologies or equipment to help your child with daily living activities, or modifications to your home. The NDIS will not fund support that falls under the responsibility of mainstream services like the education or health systems.

You can review your child's NDIS plan every 12 months and you can also ask to have your child's plan reviewed at other times if her circumstances change before your next scheduled review.

Options for managing your NDIS funding

There are **3 options** for managing your funding: Self-Management, NDIA Agency Management, or a registered Plan Management Provider.

Self-management is where you select to manage your supports, support workers, organisations etc. Under this system the money goes direct to the person or nominees performing the services. This provides the most flexibility of the 3 options as you can choose to use providers that are not NDIS registered.

Registered plan management

You can choose to have a registered plan management provider manage some or all of the funding for your child's support. A registered plan management provider can find and organise support for you, pay service providers, take care of the paperwork, and work with your service providers to decide how and when your child gets support. The cost of this intermediary function should be included in your child's plan. Providers that you use do not need to be NDIS registered.





NDIA Agency Management (the NDIS governing body)

Under this system the NDIA holds the funds on your behalf and your service provider, support workers etc. claim their costs direct from the NDIA through the NDIA portal. You can only use NDIS registered providers under this option

If you're using a combination of management options, you need to use **NDIS registered service providers** for those parts of the funding managed by the NDIA.

How much funding am I likely to get through the NDIS for ABA therapy/services?

This is determined on an individual-needs basis by your NDIS planning/assessment officer. Information we have to date shows that amounts funded vary. The most important thing is to be clear about your child's needs—the level and type of services they require—before presenting for your initial NDIS appointment. The NDIA will only fund supports they deem 'reasonable and necessary' so it's recommended you have a good understanding of what this means prior to your planning meeting. We highly recommend you speak to your ABA provider to assist you with this process before you have your planning meeting. If you don't already have a provider, please make contact so we can connect you with one in your area.

To find out more visit <https://www.ndis.gov.au>

HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM PACKAGE

Until NDIS funding is available in your area, the Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) package will continue to provide support for children aged 0 - 6 years with Autism, their families and carers. The Department of Social Services (formerly FaHCSIA) provides funding of \$12,000 per diagnosed child through their *Helping Children with Autism* (HCWA) initiative.

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 Remote¹ 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.

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 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 Services' 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. For further information about the HCWA 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 3 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 Chronic Disease Plan	The Better Access Plan ¹	Helping Children with Autism (Access to Treatment)
No of sessions	5	6 (4) individual +10 group	20
Frequency	Per calendar year	Per calendar year	One-off item ²
Adult eligibility	✓	✓	✗
Audiologist	✓	✗	✓
GPs	✓	✓	✗
Groups Sessions	✗	✓	✗
Occupational Therapist	✓	✓	✓
Optometrist	✗	✗	✓
Orthoptist	✗	✗	✓
Paediatrician	✗	✓	✓
Physiotherapist	✓	✗	✓
Psychiatrist	✗	✓	✓
Psychologist	✓	✓	✓
Social Worker	✓	✓	✗
Speech Therapist	✓	✗	✓

1. Also often referred to as a mental health care plan. Note that primary reason for referral cannot be ASD, often anxiety, conduct disorder, depression or sleep difficulties.

2. To be used prior to the young person's 15th birthday, however the treatment plan must be in place prior to the child's 13th birthday.





Referrals to the **Chronic Disease Management plan** *must* be written by a GP. These plans provide limited Medicare rebates (5 visits per calendar year to allied health professionals) for individuals with a chronic condition - defined as persisting for more than six months - which qualifies autism.

Your GP will write a plan that:

- identifies your child's healthcare needs
- sets out the services your GP provides, and
- lists what you need to do

There are 2 types of plans that can be prepared by a GP – a Chronic Disease Management Plan & a Team Care Arrangements Plan (TCAs). The latter plan may be additionally provided if your child has complex care needs requiring treatment from 2 or more other health care providers. For further information visit: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mbsprimarycare-chronicdisease-pdf-infosheet>

Referrals to the **Better Access to Mental Health plan** can be written by a paediatrician or psychiatrist, but are more commonly provided by GPs. This initiative provides 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 & parents and carers can also access the scheme if necessary. Under the scheme Medicare rebates are available to patients for selected mental health services provided by GP's, psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists & social workers.

For further information visit: <http://www.health.gov.au/mentalhealth-betteraccess>

Referrals to the **Helping Children with Autism plan** must be written by a paediatrician (MBS 135) or psychiatrist (MBS 289). The plan enables rebates for up to 20 treatment services from psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, audiologists, optometrists, orthoptists or physiotherapists (for a child under 15 years of age, providing a treatment and management plan is in place before their 13th birthday). 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.

MBS item numbers for **Treatment Services** (not diagnoses/assessment as these are different) of children with autism/PDD are:

- 82015 Psychologist
- 82020 Speech pathologist
- 82025 Occupational therapist
- 82035 Audiologist, optometrist, orthoptist, physiotherapist

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 is 20 sessions in total). The preferred service provider must be specified in the plan.

Families can access all three plans simultaneously.





OTHER

Medicare Safety Net

Families must register as a Medicare Safety Net family. This includes those on the same Medicare card. If you're registered as a family your medical costs are combined so that you're more likely to reach the thresholds sooner. There are different Medicare Safety Net thresholds depending on your circumstances. More information can be found here:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/medicare-safety-net>

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION SERVICES FLEXIBLE SUPPORT PACKAGES (ECIS FSP)

Early Childhood Intervention Service Flexible Support Packages (ECIS FSP) support children with a disability or developmental delay from birth to school entry, along with their families and carers. ECIS FSP provide additional services and supports not usually available through universal or ECIS services.

Services are tailored to meet the individual needs of the child and to provide support to the family to optimise their child's development and ability to participate in family and community life.

Under this package funding is limited to \$5,500 per child per financial year (please note this is an 'up to' amount, not an entitlement amount). As per the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development's website, funding can be sought to assist in three ways:

- supporting the provision of opportunities that address the current learning, development and wellbeing needs of the child
- minimising physical and psycho-social risks to the child, family and others
- assisting with a child's functionality and mobility to promote greater participation in family and community life.

To qualify for ECIS FSP there are five eligibility criteria that must be met.

1. You must have applied for and be receiving, or waiting for State Government funded ECIS.
2. The requested supports must be linked to your Family Services and Support Plan.
3. The supports can only be provided through ECIS FSP.
4. Supports must fit one of the approved categories.
5. Supports must be targeted and time-limited.

Further information can be found by visiting:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/parents/needs/Pages/flexiblesupportpackages.aspx>





CENTRELINK

Carer Allowance: a fortnightly payment of \$124.70 per fortnight (not means tested) for the carers of child with a disability. 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.

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/carer-allowance>

Carer Payment: An income support payment if you give constant care to someone who has a severe disability or illness. Medical reports are used to check if you can receive the Carer Payment. For further information visit:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/carer-payment>

Child Disability Carer Payment: An automatic yearly payment if you get the Carer Allowance and are looking after a child with a disability or serious illness. Each year you can get up to \$1,000 for each child who qualifies for Carer Allowance. If you are getting Carer Allowance for 2 children, you will get 2 payments.

For further information visit:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/child-disability-assistance-payment#a1>

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: **Registered Care** and **Approved Care**.

Registered Care is 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. The current registered care rate for a non-school aged child in up to 50 hours of care per week is \$0.719 per child per hour, or \$35.95 per child per week. Payment rates for school aged children are 85% of the non-school aged rate.

You are paid Child Care Benefit for registered child care directly if you submit a claim and provide your child care receipts. 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
2. 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.





3. 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.
4. 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.

For more information on Registered Care visit:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/registered-carers>

Approved Care: Approved child care services have Australian Government approval to pass on Child Care Benefit as a reduction in child care fees. This means you pay less money out of your own pocket. Approved child care can include: Long day care, Family day care, Outside school hours care, Vacation care, In home care, and Occasional care.

If you use approved child care, you can receive Child Care Benefit:

- up to 24 hours per child per week, available to all eligible families, or
- up to 50 hours per child per week if:
 - you or your partner are a grandparent with primary care of a grandchild
 - you and your partner are working, looking for work, training, or studying for at least 15 hours per week or 30 hours per fortnight, or
 - you and your partner meet an exception from that requirement
- More than 50 hours per week is available to families in certain circumstances who need extra assistance.

The current approved care rate for a non-school aged child is \$4.30 per child per hour, or \$215.00 per week. Payment rates for school aged children are 85% of the non-school aged rate. You may be able to get a higher rate of payment if you're a grandparent with primary care of a grandchild or if your family has special circumstances. Grandparent Child Care Benefit and Special Child Care Benefit have additional eligibility requirements.

To receive Child Care Benefit for approved care, you need to be eligible and meet an income test. You don't have to meet an assets test. Even though you may not receive any benefit due to your income, you may still be eligible for Child Care Rebate. The amount of benefit you get for approved care depends on your annual family income. If you receive the benefit as reduced fees through the year, we'll work out your fee reduction based on your annual family income estimate.

In-Home Care (IHC) is a flexible form of child care where an approved educator provides care in the child's home. It's a flexible form of child care which enables families with unusual work, location or care requirements to access approved child care in their own home. Recent Government initiatives have expanded the availability of in-home care and funding has been increased to enable more families to access the service.

To be eligible for In Home Care, families must have no access to existing child care services and/or their circumstances mean that an existing child care service cannot meet their needs. Families with a child or children with a chronic illness or disability may meet this criteria.





In-home care providers aim to give children a similar experience to what they would receive in other forms of care. This means your child will have the opportunity to participate in supervised activities they might not be able to do ordinarily such as arts and crafts, games and outdoor play. Remember that families who are able to access in-home care are also eligible to receive the Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Tax Rebate.

For further information visit: <https://www.education.gov.au/information-approved-home-care-providers-0>

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>.





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/providers/needs/Pages/kindersupportpackages.aspx>

PAYMENT & SERVICE PROVIDER ONLINE TOOL

The Department of Human Services has a **Payment & Service Provider online tool** that can help you find, estimate & compare payments that you may be eligible for:

https://www.centrelink.gov.au/custsite_pfe/pymtfinderest/paymentFinderEstimatorPage.jsf?wec-appid=pymtfinderest&wec-locale=en_US#stay





HELPFUL LINKS

Autism Behavioural Intervention Association

www.abia.net.au

National Disability Insurance Scheme

www.ndis.gov.au

Amaze (Autism Victoria)

www.amaze.org.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>.

Carers Victoria

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

Centre Link

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/payments-people-living-illness-injury-or-disability#a2>

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

Medicare

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/medicare>

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

Healthcare Card

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

The Raising Children Network

www.raisingchildren.ent.au/autism

and the link below to access information about autism and financial support

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/autism_spectrum_disorder_financial_support.html

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