

## Coordination of Care: Medication Management

### IMPORTANCE OF MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

Given the number of individuals with autism who are also treated with psychiatric medication, collaboration of care with primary care physicians, psychiatrists, or other medical and/or behavioral health specialists is essential for the best treatment outcomes for a member. There are no FDA approved medications that target the core symptoms of ASD itself. However, co-occurring psychiatric disorders are common, affecting up to 70% of children with ASD (anxiety, ADHD, ODD most commonly). Medication is frequently prescribed to target non-core symptoms of ASD, such as irritability, aggression, hyperactivity, and anxiety. Behavior Analysts with their specialized expertise are an integral member of a multi-disciplinary treatment team. Coordinated efforts regarding medication management are important to:

- Maximize therapeutic outcomes
- Identify opportunities for titration of medications and reduction of dosage
- Review for opportunities of non-pharmacological, psychosocial treatments
- Assess for side effects and co-occurring medical complications
- Encourage collaboration that can positively influence the treatment plan

### A BEHAVIOR ANALYST'S ROLE:

- Provide data on the effects of behavioral treatments on a member's skill acquisition and/or behavior reduction prior to the introduction of medication.
- Share baseline data on any challenging behaviors that may be a barrier to learning in treatment.
- Share both qualitative and quantitative data with medical providers related to a member's behavior. This valuable information supports the evaluation of the efficacy of a medication and provides opportunities for shaping treatment with medication.
- Observe side effects of medication and partner with members, parents, and/or caregivers to communicate concerns to medical providers.

### BENEFITS OF MEDICATION MANAGEMENT COLLABORATION:

- Develop a better understanding of the intent/purpose and desired results for the treatment with medication.
- Ensure metabolic labs and assessments occur for members on antipsychotics to enable early identification for potential comorbidities.
- Enable members to be more receptive to behavioral interventions, thereby improving the effectiveness of treatment with ABA.
- Improve treatment outcomes that can be achieved through integrated, collaborative care that relies on the expertise found in each discipline.

References: Lamy, M., Pedapati, E.V., Dominick, K.L. *et al.* Recent Advances in the Pharmacological Management of Behavioral Disturbances Associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Children and Adolescents. *Pediatr Drugs* 22, 473–483 (2020); Fallah, Merrick S *et al.* "Atypical Antipsychotics for Irritability in Pediatric Autism: A Systematic Review and Network Meta-Analysis." *Journal of child and adolescent psychopharmacology* vol. 29,3 (2019): 168-180; Li, A., Poling, A. Board Certified Behavior Analysts and Psychotropic Medications: Slipshod Training, Inconsistent Involvement, and Reason for Hope. *Behav Analysis Practice* 11, 350–357 (2018).