PRACTITIONER RESOURCE

ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS

Tips for Facilitating Active Communication with Funders

March, 2025

www.apbahome.net

As practicing behavior analysts who work with healthcare and other funders, you should view your payor contacts as colleagues who are part of the client's treatment team. Funders can be valuable resources and can help you actively manage your client's treatment programming and may offer additional resources available outside of ABA-based services. Below are some considerations for facilitating active communication with funders in service of high-quality case management.

Funders as Team Members

Before we jump into things, it's worth noting that funders are a part of the treatment team, and they only have the information that you provide to them. Do your best to include everything they need to make informed decisions about a case. Things to consider:

- There is a clear rationale for why assessment and goals were selected, linked to the individual characteristics of the client and medical necessity. If you are not sure, check in with a supervisor or work colleague who can look at things with fresh eyes to give you feedback about what you might be able to clarify. Always ensure that you follow applicable ethical and legal requirements related to maintaining client confidentiality.
- Service types and doses are clearly justified based on your clinical judgment and prioritization of client primary needs identified through the assessment.
- If the fully recommended dose was not consistently delivered or could not be provided for a period that likely impacted outcomes, describe the rationale (e.g., client availability limits, significant event) and description of rationale indicating if it is appropriate to amend the treatment plan (i.e., narrowed dose and treatment goals).
- There are easy to read graphs with clearly labeled event lines to indicate significant life or medical events (e.g., new baby in the house, change to meds, a surgery), and phase change lines to reflect pauses in services or changes to the interventions or program.
- Clear descriptions about how you attempted to address or did address things such as variable client responding, lack of progress, regression, and low utilization.

Funders As Information Resources

It is important that you are familiar with and understand the requirements in each funder contract and corresponding provider policy/manual. Yes, it is each individual behavior analyst's responsibility to ensure that they know what is required to comply with each funder contract; it is not enough to rely on your employer or billing department to know the requirements. Considerations for ensuring that you know the requirements:

- Ask for a copy of each funder's provider manual – this is the document that will give you the most specific information about requirements related to services, documentation, billing, etc.
- Ask for a copy of any additional funder policies that are relevant to ABA-based services that may not be within the manual (e.g., medical necessity policy).
- Ask for a copy of each funder's contract and familiarize yourself with relevant federal or state regulations affecting ABA-based services (e.g., DHHS), but remember that the most relevant information is likely in the provider policy/manual and provider billing guide.
- Create a cheat sheet or check list for things like initial authorizations and reauthorizations, paying attention to timeline requirements.
- When you are new to a funder, ask to attend new provider orientation meeting; most funders have recurring orientation meetings.
- Find out if there is an option to self-enroll in payer-specific email notifications to remain up-to-date and learn about resources and trainings,
- Ask for your payor's contact information to keep on file for when you have questions.
- If you have questions about requirements or expectations, first go to the contract or manual. If you are not able to find the information, or if you are still unclear, contact the funder directly. Avoid posting questions on social media platforms and in groups as you have no way of verifying the accuracy of the responses and they may not be applicable to your location or specific contract with a funder.
- Retain copies of correspondence (e.g., emails, letters) with payors. Following a phone conversation, send an email with a summary of your notes from the conversation and an invitation for the payor to suggest revisions in case they disagree with your notes or feel you left something out and retain a copy of your email and their response.

Funders As Collaborators on Case Management

Your payor contact can help you with case management responsibilities so that you can best serve your clients.

- Ask them for feedback about how to be more successful with your case management tasks and activities. For example, you might ask for them to help you identify why your last treatment authorization request was denied or went to peer review.
- Connect with them when there are concerns and you need additional services hours or service types (e.g., more assessment or protocol modification hours, addition of group adaptive behavior treatment services). Be prepared to provide a clear rationale for why the increase or addition is needed and will result in desired outcomes. Share data to support your rationale and additional goals or activities (e.g., assessments to be conducted) that will be addressed using the additional service hours or service types.
- Some events might rise to the level that you should notify your payor contact. Review the provider manual and regulations relevant to your payor (e.g., state Medicaid regulations or other state Health and Safety Codes) to determine which events must be reported (e.g., sentinel events, critical events, billing errors). If you are uncertain on whether something is reportable to the payor, ask your payor contact. Be sure you understand timelines and procedures for reporting these events.

Funders As Support Resources

Did you know that funders are excellent resources who can help you identify if there are other services that may benefit your client or others? Your payor contacts have access to a vast network of related resources and services that are outside your scope of competence and might complement the services you are providing. For example, if your client’s parents are experiences stressors, your payor contact may be able to assist in connecting them with resources like respite care, individual or couples counseling, medical providers, substance use supports, or nutritional supports.

Wrap Up

As practicing behavior analysts, our efforts are always focused on working in the best interest of the client. Doing so requires that we take an interactive approach with the treatment team, which includes the funder. Taking the time to build and maintain a strong working relationship with your payor contact through on-going communication and collaboration will directly benefit your clients and their caregivers.