

Jenny Schilling, parent of a child with autism  
Massillon, Ohio

Senate Medicaid Committee  
Testimony on HB 96 (SFY 2026-27 Operating Budget)  
May 9, 2025

I spent years trying to get her 13-year-old son, Owen, into an ABA treatment.

We can't wait; Medicaid coverage for ABA therapy is unstable, with many children not getting the treatment they were prescribed and need. We need your support for our three-state amendment proposals by the Ohio Autism Insurance Coalition to stabilize the ABA therapy coverage within Medicaid.

Here is my information from a recent article I was engaged in to share the massive access challenges for autism therapies and Medicaid.

*"Common autism treatment out of reach for many Ohioans because of state inaction, advocates say"* Source: <https://signalcleveland.org/common-autism-treatment-out-of-reach-for-many-ohioans-because-of-state-inaction-advocates-say/>

Gov. Mike DeWine's Medicaid department is moving to standardize coverage rules for Applied Behavioral Analysis therapy after years of what advocates call "The Wild West."

**'They have no answers for us'**

Jenny Schilling, 32, said she's spent years trying to get her 13-year-old son, Owen, into an ABA treatment center.

Owen has a host of medical problems, including severe autism and a gastrointestinal tube that requires close supervision. Shilling, who lives in the Massillon area, lacks a network of nearby friends and family to watch Owen and his 2-year-old sister, leaving her scrambling to find consistent care for them as she tries to work her bartending job and make ends meet.

Owen recently was kicked out of a daycare for kids with special needs, and Shilling's grandmother is getting too old to help, especially as Owen has gotten bigger and begun puberty. He attends a special needs school, but has been attacking staff recently.

"My son rips flat screens out of the wall. He grabs staff by their hair. He is out of control sometimes. And he can't help it," Schilling said. "He needs help."

With help from an advocate, Schilling recently got approved for an at-home, after-school aide for Owen. But he's still completely nonverbal and prone to violent outbursts when he gets frustrated.

"I can't tell you how many aides I've been through because my son's so out of control they can't deal with it. They're not getting paid enough to do it. I hate saying this, because I'm going to stay by my son's side for the rest of my life, but I don't blame them," Schilling said.

When doctors have recommended ABA therapy, though, Schilling has found that nearby providers that accept Medicaid either say they have a two-year waitlist or don't have any openings at all.

"They have no answers for us," Schilling said.

### **What's next for autism therapy in Ohio**

Ohio could have actual rules for the first time soon. The state Medicaid department announced [a proposed set of rules](#) in December, seeking feedback from providers and others. The plan is to finalize them in April, the agency said. The process dates back to December 2022, when the agency first convened what it called an ABA Stakeholder Work Group. State officials hope the changes will help increase the number of ABA providers who accept Medicaid, providing more options for families.

The state last publicized suggested reimbursement rates for ABA providers in 2018, Fernandez said. The list since has been taken down.

But, in 2018, Ohio's proposed reimbursement rate was \$50.76 an hour. The national average is \$62.80. The new rate in Ohio, proposed in the rules, would be \$64.16 an hour.

There are other technical components to the rules, including what services are eligible for reimbursement and what documentary evidence providers must submit. Different groups, including managed care companies, ABA providers and autism advocates, have given feedback to the state.

Fernandez with the ABA trade group calls the new proposed rate "a huge improvement" when it comes to rates. She said she expects that when they're adopted, they will attract more providers.

But, she said her colleagues will push the state on more technical aspects of the plan to make sure as many treatments are covered as possible.

"It's been a long road. We're very thankful that it's out there. We just want to make sure that the final policy is consistent with federal rules and regulations and guidance," Fernandez said.

Meanwhile, Gonda, the ABA provider in Youngstown, said families in Ohio don't have time to wait.

"We have created a system with massive amounts of public funding that has no rules around it, and the people that are getting the shortest end of the stick are the children with autism that are on Medicaid," Gonda said.

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Please reach out to Marla Root at the Ohio Autism Insurance Coalition to get the amendments. P: 614-565-5765 or E: [help@asdohio.com](mailto:help@asdohio.com)