

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

---

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education Pre-K -12

---

BILL: SB 514

INTRODUCER: Senator Hooper

SUBJECT: Private Instructional Personnel

DATE: March 13, 2023

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Sagues	Bouck	ED	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.	_____	_____	HP	_____
3.	_____	_____	RC	_____

---

**I. Summary:**

SB 514 modifies the requirements of a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT). Under the bill, the RBT is no longer be required to be employed by an enrolled Medicaid provider to provide Applied Behavior Analyst services in a K-12 public school, and instead, must be employed by a certified behavior analyst or a professional licensed under chapter 490, the “Psychological Services Act” or chapter 491, Clinical, Counseling, and Psychotherapy Services, of the Florida Statutes.

The bill has no fiscal impact.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2023.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Applied Behavior Analysis Services**

Behavior Analysis measures outcomes through data collection and the direct observation of behavior.<sup>1</sup> Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the use of principles and methods of behavior analysis to bring about meaningful changes in socially important behaviors.<sup>2</sup> ABA is best known for its success in treating individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD)<sup>3</sup> and other

---

<sup>1</sup> Florida Association for Behavior Analysis, *What is Behavior Analysis?*, <https://www.fabaworld.org/what-is-behavior-analysis> (last visited March 03, 2023).

<sup>2</sup> Association of Professional Behavior Analysts, *Identifying Applied Behavior Analysis Interventions white paper*, (2017), available at <https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.apbahome.net/resource/collection/1FDDDBDD2-5CAF-4B2A-AB3F-DAE5E72111BF/APBAwhitepaperABAinterventions.pdf>, at 16 (last visited March 3, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> ASD means any of the following disorders as defined in the most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association: Autistic disorder, Asperger’s syndrome, and Pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified. Section 627.6686(2), F.S.

developmental disabilities.<sup>4</sup> Florida law defines ABA as “the design, implementation, and evaluation of environmental modifications, using behavioral stimuli and consequences, to produce socially significant improvement in human behavior, including but not limited to, the use of direct observation, measurement, and functional analysis of the relations between environment and behavior.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Autism Spectrum Disorder Prevalence**

In 2019 and 2020, 410 out of the 12,554 children aged 3 to 17 years included in the National Health Interview Survey<sup>6</sup> were diagnosed with ASD. The prevalence of ASD increased from 2.79 percent in 2019 to 3.49 percent in 2020.<sup>7</sup>

By 2030, the need for substance abuse, behavioral disorder, and mental health counselors is expected to grow by 19 percent in Florida.<sup>8</sup> Currently, Florida employs 17,710 individuals in such position and has 17,598 job openings.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, for certified ABA providers, Florida supplies approximately 4 ABA providers per 100 children with ASD, when approximately 6-8 are needed depending on the level of treatment required.<sup>10</sup>

### **ABA Service Providers and Certification**

Florida’s Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD) is required to recognize a non-profit corporation for the certification of behavior analysts. The non-profit corporation is required to:<sup>11</sup>

- Adhere to the national standards of boards that determine professional credentials; and
- Have a mission to meet professional credentialing needs identified by behavior analysts, state governments, and consumers of behavior analysis services.

Further, the certification procedure recognized by the APD must undergo regular psychometric review and validation, pursuant to a job analysis survey of the profession and standards established by content experts in the field.<sup>12</sup> The APD recognizes the certification awarded by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Inc.,<sup>13</sup> which certifies the three provider types: Board

---

<sup>4</sup> Behavior Analyst Certification Board, *Autism & Intellectual/Development Disabilities*, [https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Behavioral-Treatment-of-Autism-and-Other-Developmental-Disabilities-Fact-Sheet\\_210108.pdf](https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Behavioral-Treatment-of-Autism-and-Other-Developmental-Disabilities-Fact-Sheet_210108.pdf) (last visited March 3, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Sections 627.6686(2)(a), F.S. and 641.31098(2)(a), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Health Interview Survey, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/data-questionnaires-documentation.htm> (last visited Mar. 3, 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Neurology Advisor, Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder Up Among Youths, <https://www.neurologyadvisor.com/topics/autism-spectrum-disorder/prevalence-autism-spectrum-disorder-youths-us/#:~:text=The%20estimated%20prevalence%20of%20autism%20spectrum%20disorder%20%28ASD%29,Pediatrics.%20The%20prevalence%20of%20ASD%20is%20globally%20increasing.> (last visited Mar., 3, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Department of Economic Opportunity, *Florida Insight Occupational Data Search*, <https://floridajobs.org/economic-data/employment-projections/occupational-data-search> (last visited Mar. 3, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Yidan Xue Zhang and Janet R. Cummings, *Supply of Certified Applied Behavior Analysts in the United States: Implications for Service Delivery for Children with Autism*, *Psychiatric Services*, Volume 71, Issue 4 April 01, 2020, available at <https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/epdf/10.1176/appi.ps.201900058> at 387.

<sup>11</sup> Section 393.17(2), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> Rule 65G-4.0011, F.A.C.

Certified Behavior Analysts, Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts, and Registered Behavior Technicians.

The Behavior Analyst Certification Board's requirements for certification are outlined below:

- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBAs):<sup>14</sup>
  - At least a master's degree in applied behavior analysis or a closely-related field;
  - Completion of 270 hours of graduate-level instruction in specified behavior analysis topics;
  - Completion of specified hours of supervised experiential training in ABA; and,
  - Passage of the BCBA examination.
- Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBAs):<sup>15</sup>
  - At least a bachelor's degree;
  - Completion of 180 classroom hours of instruction in specified behavior analysis topics;
  - Completion of specified hours of supervised experiential training in ABA; and,
  - Passage of the BCaBA examination.
- Registered Behavior Technician (RBTs):<sup>16</sup>
  - At least a high school diploma;
  - Be at least 18 years old;
  - Completion of 40 hours of training in specified behavior analysis topics;
  - Completion of the RBT competency assessment; and
  - Passage of the RBT examination.

The RBT is a paraprofessional certified in behavior analysis. RBTs may assist in delivering ABA services under the direction and supervision of a BCBA or a BCaBA.<sup>17</sup>

### Medicaid Coverage of ABA Services

Florida Medicaid has covered ABA services since 2012.<sup>18</sup> In 2017, the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) adopted a provider reimbursement rule, setting a formal classification for ABA providers that closely follows the certification hierarchy of the BCBA. The rule established “lead analysts” as those professionals either holding a BCBA certification or professionals licensed by the state under chapters 490 or 491, F.S. The rule also recognizes other personnel who are permitted to provide ABA services, such as those holding BCaBA credentials and RBT credentials.<sup>19</sup>

To enroll as a behavior analysis provider in Florida's Medicaid Program, a provider must submit an enrollment application along with documentation of proof of certification, which is then

---

<sup>14</sup> Behavior Analyst Certification Board, *Board Certified Behavior Analyst Handbook* (2022), available at [https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BCBAHandbook\\_210915-2.pdf](https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BCBAHandbook_210915-2.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Behavior Analyst Certification Board, *Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst Handbook* (2022), available at [https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BCaBAHandbook\\_210915-2.pdf](https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BCaBAHandbook_210915-2.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Behavior Analyst Certification Board, *Registered Behavior Technician Handbook* (2022), available at [https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/RBTHandbook\\_210915-3.pdf](https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/RBTHandbook_210915-3.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> *Id.*

<sup>18</sup> See The Florida Bar Foundation, *Federal judge orders state of Florida to cover applied behavioral analysis therapy for autism*, (July 1, 2012), <https://thefloridabarfoundation.org/federal-judge-orders-state-of-florida-to-cover-applied-behavioral-analysis-therapy-for-autism/> (last visited Mar. 3, 2023).

<sup>19</sup> Rule 59G-4.125, F.A.C.

evaluated and verified by AHCA.<sup>20</sup> Depending on the type of BCBA certification, a provider may apply as a sole proprietor or a sole proprietor enrolling as a member of a group.<sup>21</sup> An RBT may only apply as a sole proprietor enrolling as a member of a Medicaid-enrolled behavior analysis group and AHCA requires a behavior analysis group to have at least one lead analyst as a group member.<sup>22</sup>

### **ABA Services in Florida's Public Schools**

In an educational setting, behavior analysis provides a scientific approach to designing, implementing, and evaluating instruction based on analyzing interactions between what the teacher does and student learning.<sup>23</sup>

Section 1003.572, F.S., was created in 2013,<sup>24</sup> to encourage cooperation and coordination of services for students with disabilities through public and private instructional collaboration. Private instructional personnel who are hired by or contracted by parents to collaborate with public instructional personnel must be permitted to observe the student in the educational setting, act as a team with instructional personnel in the educational setting, and provide services in the educational setting.<sup>25</sup> Private instructional personnel must undergo a background screening, and the student's public instructional personnel and principal must consent to the time and place.<sup>26</sup> Section 1003.572, F.S., defines term "private instructional personnel" to include:<sup>27</sup>

- Individuals certified under s. 393.17, F.S., (a Board Certified Behavior Analyst) or individuals licensed under ch. 490, F.S.,<sup>28</sup> or ch. 491, F.S.,<sup>29</sup> for applied behavior analysis services.
- Speech-language pathologists licensed under s. 468.1185, F.S.
- Occupational therapists licensed under part III of ch. 468, F.S.
- Physical therapists licensed under ch. 486, F.S.
- Psychologists licensed under ch. 490, F.S.
- Clinical social workers licensed under ch. 491, F.S.

---

<sup>20</sup> Agency for Health Care Administration, *Enrolling as a Florida Medicaid Behavior Analysis Provider* (April 25, 2019), at 9, available at [https://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/Policy\\_and\\_Quality/Policy/behavioral\\_health\\_coverage/bhfu/pdf/Enrolling\\_as\\_a\\_Florida\\_a\\_Medicaid\\_Behavior\\_Analysis\\_Provider.pdf](https://ahca.myflorida.com/medicaid/Policy_and_Quality/Policy/behavioral_health_coverage/bhfu/pdf/Enrolling_as_a_Florida_a_Medicaid_Behavior_Analysis_Provider.pdf); A Medicaid Provider Enrollment Level 2 background screening is also required.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 13.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.* at 12-21.

<sup>23</sup> Behavior Analyst Certification Board, *Behavior Analysis in Education*, [https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Behavior-Analysis-in-Education-Fact-Sheet\\_210108.pdf](https://www.bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Behavior-Analysis-in-Education-Fact-Sheet_210108.pdf) (last visited Mar. 3, 2023).

<sup>24</sup> Section 5, ch. 2013-236, Laws of Fla.

<sup>25</sup> Section 1003.572(3), F.S.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> Section 1003.572(1), F.S.

<sup>28</sup> Chapter 490, "Psychological Services Act" regulates psychological services in the state of Florida, including but not limited to, the process and requirements to become a Florida Department of Health licensed psychologist, defining the scope of practice of psychology, and the continuing education requirements of a licensed psychologist.

<sup>29</sup> Chapter 491, regulates mental health counseling, clinical social work, and marriage and family therapy, including but not limited to the process and requirements to become a Florida Department of Health licensed marriage and family therapist, clinical social worker, and mental health counselor.

**III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

SB 514 modifies the requirements of a Registered Behavior Technician (RBT). Under the bill, the RBT would no longer be required to be employed by an enrolled Medicaid provider to provide Applied Behavior Analyst (ABA) services in a K-12 public school, and instead, must be employed by a certified behavior analyst or professional licensed under chapter 490 or chapter 491, F.S.

Given the increasing prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) among school age children, the bill may help to increase the supply of ABA providers to meet the needs of this population.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2023.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:****A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

None.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 1003.572 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.