

Coordination of Care: Medication Management Tip Sheet

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 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) itself.

However, co-occurring psychiatric disorders are common, affecting up to 70% of children with ASD. Anxiety, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) affect children with ASD 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 Advanced Behavioral Health Analysis (ABA).
- Improve treatment outcomes that can be achieved through integrated, collaborative care that relies on the expertise found in each discipline.