



UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

APR 11 2014

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The enclosed semiannual report provides the current status of the Department of Defense Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration, as requested by page 672 of the Joint Explanatory Statement, accompanying S. 3001 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 (Public Law 110-417). Specifically, this report includes: 1) the number of autistic children served, 2) cost data, 3) the number of available providers by region, and 4) whether reimbursement levels are sufficient to retain qualified providers in TRICARE networks.

Current results indicate participation by beneficiaries and partners continues to increase. We believe these increases reflect conditions where reimbursement rates are acceptable to providers, thus allowing for increased capacity to meet the needs of enrolled TRICARE beneficiaries.

While this report specifically discusses the Autism Services Demonstration, the Department is actively implementing section 705 of the NDAA for FY 2013, which authorized the Department to conduct a 1-year pilot program to expand the scope of services for the treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Pilot will run for 1 year beginning July 25, 2013, and ending July 24, 2014. This is an enhancement to current benefits for non-Active Duty Family members with ASD, who may now access ABA reinforcement services from Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts and ABA tutors.

Thank you for your interest in the health and well-being of our Service members, veterans, and their families. A similar letter is being sent to the Chairpersons of the other congressional defense committees.

Sincerely,


Jessica L. Wright
Acting

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member



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PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

APR 11 2014

The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The enclosed semiannual report provides the current status of the Department of Defense Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration, as requested by explanatory material to Section 732 of the Joint Explanatory Statement, accompanying S. 3001 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009. Specifically, this report includes: 1) the number of autistic children served, 2) cost data, 3) the number of available providers by region, and 4) whether reimbursement levels are sufficient to retain qualified providers in TRICARE networks.

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Jessica L. Wright
Acting

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member



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PERSONNEL AND
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APR 11 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

The enclosed semiannual report provides the current status of the Department of Defense Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration, as requested by explanatory material to Section 732 of the Joint Explanatory Statement, accompanying S. 3001 of the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009. Specifically, this report includes: 1) the number of autistic children served, 2) cost data, 3) the number of available providers by region, and 4) whether reimbursement levels are sufficient to retain qualified providers in TRICARE networks.

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Sincerely,


Jessica L. Wright
Acting

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Vice Chairman



UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

APR 11 2014

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Sincerely,


Jessica L. Wright
Acting

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member

Report to Congress



The Department of Defense Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration January 2014 Semiannual Report to Congress

In Response to: **The Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the Duncan
Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (Public Law
110-417)**

The estimated cost of report or
study for the Department of
Defense is approximately
\$8,100.00 for the 2014 Fiscal Year.
This includes \$8,100.00 in
expenses and \$0.00 in DoD labor.
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STATUS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ENHANCED ACCESS TO AUTISM SERVICES DEMONSTRATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This semiannual report is in response to page 672 of the Joint Explanatory Statement to accompany the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 (Public Law 110-417). The Joint Explanatory Statement requested the Secretary to provide an initial report to Congress not later than 90 days after the enactment and semiannually thereafter on the status of implementation of the TRICARE demonstration.

INTRODUCTION

In response to Section 717 of the John Warner NDAA for FY 2007 [Pub. L. 109-364, October 17, 2006], the Department of Defense used the authority under Title 10, U.S.C., Section 1092, to conduct a demonstration within the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) with a view to improving the quality, efficiency, convenience, and cost effectiveness of providing services to eligible active duty family members (ADFM) diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Central to the demonstration was the authority under Section 1092 to provide reimbursement for the one-on-one Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services rendered by an individual who is not a TRICARE-authorized provider. Such a non-certified individual is referred to in the demonstration as an "ABA tutor".

To increase access and test the advisability and feasibility of authorizing TRICARE reimbursement for ABA services delivered by non-professional providers, the Department developed and implemented the Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration. The key feature of the demonstration is providing ABA for ASD by a two-tiered delivery model:

- Individuals certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) at the Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) or BACB Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) level as "supervisors" who have a contractual relationship with TRICARE, either individually or as an employee of a TRICARE-authorized provider; and
- Non-certified individuals (i.e., "Tutors") as the "hands-on" providers of ABA under the supervision of a BCBA or BCaBA.

The Demonstration was initially implemented on March 15, 2008. Administrative requirements of the Demonstration were substantially revised and implemented on September 10, 2008. In addition, Section 732 of the NDAA for FY 2009 increased the limit of government authority to pay for certain benefits, including Special Education, from \$2,500.00 per month to \$36,000.00 per year. That change was implemented on April 1, 2009.

RESULTS

Utilization and Cost

Based on information generated using TRICARE purchased-care ECHO claims, the annual number of TRICARE ASD beneficiaries who have used the ECHO tutor demo program increased by nearly five times between FY 2009 and FY 2013, from 1,225 to 5,983 users or a 49% average annual growth rate. However, the ECHO tutor demo user growth rate has been decreasing over the years declining to 28% between FY 2011 and FY 2012 and 25% between FY 2012 and FY 2013. By region, the number of users getting ECHO tutor demo services was 2,648 in the West region (45%), 1,497 in the South region (39%), and 1,451 (37%) in the North region.

Consistent with the increase in ADFM ECHO demo users, total annual ECHO tutor demo costs increased at an annual average rate of 64% between FY 2009 and FY 2013 (from \$11.4 million to \$83.1 million). These costs have grown at decreasing annual rates—34% between FY 2011 and FY 2012 and 16% between FY 2012 and FY 2013.

ADFM Users Reaching the Annual ECHO Expenditures Cap.

There has always been a great deal of interest in the share of ASD users that are near or reaching the \$36,000.00 annual fiscal year cap on ECHO expenditures. This issue must be viewed somewhat differently with the implementation of the TRICARE Basic ABA program because there are no annual expenditure limits under this program. To address this concern, we examine users by annual expenditures separately for those who only use the ECHO program services (i.e. those limited to the \$36,000.00 cap) and those who use TRICARE Basic ABA services (including those who use the ECHO program in combination with ABA Basic services). In FY13, 4.2% of ADFMs using only ECHO program services (218 of 5,131 users) had annual expenditures at or near the \$36,000.00 annual cap (we define this as those with more than \$35,000.00 annually).

Next we examine those ADFMs using the TRICARE Basic ABA therapy program that has no annual expenditure limits. In FY13 we found that 6.6% of ADFMs using the TRICARE Basic ABA program (176 of 2,677 users) had annual expenditure at or near the \$36,000.00 cap as a point of comparison. Thus, a slightly higher proportion of those users without a cap (6.6% for Basic ABA users versus 4.2% for ECHO only users) have expenditures at or near the cap. The Defense Health Agency will continue to monitor these data.

Providers

Based on contractor submitted reports, the number of providers participating in the tutor demonstration continues to steadily increase. ABA supervisors increased from 2,316 in FY 2012 to 2,755 (19%) by the end of FY 2013. ABA tutors increased from 10,380 in FY 2012 to 10,912 (5%) by the end of FY 2013.

CONCLUSION

As evidenced in our previous reports and the above information, participation by beneficiaries and providers is steadily increasing. We believe these increases reflect that reimbursement rates are acceptable to providers and this is allowing for increased capacity to meet the needs of enrolled TRICARE beneficiaries. A low percentage of beneficiaries (6.6% for Basic ABA users and 4.2% for ECHO only users) are at or near the \$36,000.00 cap. TRICARE will continue to monitor these data.

TRICARE continues to increase access to ABA services and is leading the nation in fielding an effective ABA provision model and has extended the Autism Demonstration until March 15, 2015. Although the number of BCBAs nationwide has progressively increased, TRICARE remains concerned about the national shortfall in available BCBAs. However, reducing or eliminating the national shortfall of board-certified providers of ABA will require a concerted national effort that falls outside the Department of Defense's mission area.