

# Massachusetts expanding ABA coverage to include children with Down syndrome

*MA has expanded insurance coverage to ensure that most health plans in the Commonwealth will cover ABA for children with Down syndrome, effective 1/1/26.*



NEEDHAM, MA, UNITED STATES,  
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-- Massachusetts has expanded insurance coverage to ensure that most health plans in the Commonwealth will cover Applied Behavior Analysis ([ABA](#)) for children with Down syndrome, effective January 1, 2026. Previously, ABA was generally covered for Down syndrome only when paired with an autism diagnosis. The new law requires coverage for Down syndrome alone for services delivered on or after the effective date.



Coverage that includes ABA, Speech, and OT lets families and clinicians choose what's best for each child's goals."

*Tahra Cessna, M.S., BCBA, EVP  
of Organizational Growth &  
Development*

The statute requires coverage of the treatment of Down syndrome through speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and applied behavior analysis services, and does not limit the site of service, meaning eligible care can be delivered in-center when medically necessary and consistent with plan rules.

"Coverage that includes ABA, Speech, and OT lets families and clinicians choose what's best for each child's goals. We're partnering with payers, pediatricians, and schools to implement this thoughtfully, so children with Down syndrome can benefit from high-quality, in-center care when it supports their development and helps them thrive," says Tahra Cessna, M.S., BCBA, Executive Vice President of Organizational Growth and Development at [Bierman Autism Centers](#).

## Who is covered

Coverage applies across MassHealth, Massachusetts-regulated commercial plans (including HMOs), and state employee plans administered by the Group Insurance Commission. Standard plan processes (benefits verification, medical necessity, prior authorization, and in-network participation) will continue to apply.

As coverage expands, Bierman Autism Centers is integrating services for children with Down

syndrome into [PEBBL](#), our outcomes and research program. PEBBL is preparing to launch a focused line of research to validate the benefits of ABA for children with Down syndrome, strengthen our outcomes infrastructure, and help shape best-practice standards, keeping therapy joyful, ethical, and evidence-driven for families statewide.

What families get at Bierman (and why they choose us)

- Playful and evidence-based therapy. We “let kids be kids” while building meaningful communication, daily living, and independence skills using a tailored blend of ABA methods, including naturalistic teaching and fluency-based instruction.
- Data that moves faster. Our precision teaching model uses the Standard Celeration Chart with frequent review of the data (about every 3–5 days) so clinicians can adapt programming quickly because the learner’s progress sets the pace.
- 1:1 care and integrated services. Families have access to in-center ABA, Speech Therapy, and Occupational Therapy, all coordinated under one roof to support consistent goals and generalization.
- Results you can see. Our approach has supported more than 375 center graduations, marking major skill gains and transitions to new settings.
- A teaching-hospital model. We’re built on two pillars—clinical outcomes and clinician development—with structured mentorship, complex-case collaboration, and our Clinician-in-Training (CiT) pathway that continually elevates care quality for families.
- Compassion-first practice. We emphasize learner autonomy (e.g., assent-based care) and positive reinforcement so therapy stays joyful, ethical, and effective.

#### Services available to Massachusetts families

Bierman Autism Centers provides in-center ABA, Speech, and Occupational Therapy through a playful, child-led model that meets each child where they are. Families can begin benefits checks and clinical consults now to prepare for January start dates. Our Intake team handles authorizations and onboarding. Coverage applies to dates of service on or after January 1, 2026.

Bierman serves families from centers in Bedford, Needham, and Quincy, with a Danvers location opening this Spring.



Creating progress through play: A child participates in joyful, child-led learning at Bierman Autism Centers. Beginning Jan. 1, 2026, most Massachusetts health plans will cover ABA for children with Down syndrome. Bierman’s Intake team is ready to help fa

How Massachusetts families can get started

- Call: (888) 795-9465

- Email: [start@biermanautism.com](mailto:start@biermanautism.com)

- Online: <https://www.biermanautism.com/location/massachusetts/>

We'll verify your 2026 benefits, guide prior authorization, and schedule a family-centered consult.

### About Bierman Autism Centers

Bierman Autism Centers is a trusted leader in autism care, dedicated to helping children with autism grow, play, and thrive. Since 2006, Bierman has been transforming lives through play-based, individualized ABA therapy, empowering children to build essential skills like self-advocacy, communication, and independence.

Bierman's approach combines evidence-based practices with the joy of play, creating an engaging environment where children are excited to learn and grow. With a dual focus on delivering exceptional outcomes for children and developing great clinicians and teachers, Bierman raises the bar on clinical excellence. Inspired by the teaching hospital model, Bierman emphasizes mentorship, training, and collaboration to ensure every child—and every team member—reaches their full potential.

Bierman offers comprehensive services, including ABA therapy, Speech and Occupational Therapies, and Diagnostic Evaluations, all tailored to meet each child's unique needs. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and individualized care, Bierman helps children make meaningful progress while providing families with compassionate support throughout their journey.

With over 375 successful graduations and centers in Arizona, Indiana, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Jersey, Ohio, and Rhode Island, Bierman Autism Centers continues to set the standard in autism care. To learn more about Bierman's approach and how it is creating progress and possibilities® for children, families, and clinicians, visit [www.biermanautism.com](http://www.biermanautism.com).

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