



UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

OCT 16 2013

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The enclosed semiannual report provides the current status of the Department of Defense Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration, as required by page 672 of the Joint Explanatory Statement, accompanying 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) the type and frequency of services provided, 3) the number of available providers by region, and 4) whether reimbursement levels are sufficient to retain qualified providers in TRICARE networks. The report also includes demonstration cost information for the first 6 months of FY 2013.

Current results indicate beneficiary and partner participation continues to increase. The Department believes these increases reflect conditions where reimbursement rates are acceptable to providers. This allows increased capacity and meets 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 disorders (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 other congressional defense committees.

Sincerely,


Jessica L. Wright
Acting

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable James M. Inhofe
Ranking Member



UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

OCT 16 2013

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

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Jessica L. Wright
Acting

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member



UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

OCT 16 2013

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

Dear Madam Chairwoman:

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Jessica L. Wright
Acting

Enclosure:
As stated

cc:
The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Vice Chairman



UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-4000

OCT 16 2013

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

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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 July 2013 Semiannual Report to Congress

**In Requirements: 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 for the 2013 Fiscal Year. This includes \$8,100 in expenses and \$0 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 directed 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], DoD submitted a proposal to use 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 liability for certain benefits, including Special Education, from \$2,500 per month to \$36,000 per year. That change was implemented on April 1, 2009.

RESULTS

Utilization and Cost

Based on information generated using TRICARE purchased-care ECHO claims (see table below), the annual number of TRICARE ASD beneficiaries who have used the ECHO tutor demonstration program almost quadrupled between FY09 and FY12 (from 1,225 to 4,790 users, a 291 percent increase). ECHO tutor demonstration users increased by 104 percent between FY09 and FY10 and by 50 percent between FY10 and FY11 and by 28 percent between FY11 and FY12. Compared with the year before, ECHO tutor users increased by 29 percent for the first six months of FY13 (October 2012 through March 2013)—this is up from 26 percent for the last six months of FY12.

Annual costs per user for tutor demo users (both their tutor demonstration and non-demo ECHO costs) increased by 31 percent over the period FY09 to FY12, increasing by 24 percent between FY09 and FY10, and by a more modest 3 percent per year between FY 10 and FY11 and by 2 percent between FY11 and FY12. Annual costs per user for tutor demonstration users actually decreased by 5 percent for the first six months of FY13 when compared with a year earlier—this value is reduced to a decrease of 3 percent when TRICARE Basic ABA costs are included.

Consistent with the increase in tutor demonstration users, total annual TRICARE costs for tutor demonstration users increased by 415 percent between FY09 and FY12 (from \$15.4 million to \$79.3 million). These costs increased by 153 percent between FY09 and FY10, 55 percent between FY10 and FY11, and 31 percent between FY11 and FY12. Compared with the year before, ECHO tutor user costs increased by 22 percent (24 percent including TRICARE Basic program ABA costs) for the first six months of FY13 (October 2012 through March 2013)—this is slightly less than the 26 percent increase for the last six months of FY12.

Growth in the ECHO ABA Tutor Program Users and Expenditures Since Inception

	ECHO Tutor Demo Program Users			ECHO Tutor Demo Program Paid Amounts			Program Paid Amounts Per User		
	User Counts	Percentage Growth		Paid Amounts	Percentage Growth		Paid Amount/User	Percentage Growth	
		6 month	One Year		6 month	One Year		6 month	One Year
Six Month Increments									
FY09 First 6 Months	498	na	na	\$2,462,432	na	na	\$4,945	na	na
FY09 Last 6 Months	1,192	139%	na	\$8,897,144	261%	na	\$7,464	51%	na
FY10 First 6 Months	1,700	43%	241%	\$13,110,261	47%	432%	\$7,712	3%	56%
FY10 Last 6 Months	2,258	33%	89%	\$19,151,426	46%	115%	\$8,482	10%	14%
FY11 First 6 Months	2,761	22%	62%	\$23,558,160	23%	80%	\$8,532	1%	11%
FY11 Last 6 Months	3,423	24%	52%	\$30,003,128	27%	57%	\$8,765	3%	3%
FY12 First 6 Months	3,740	9%	35%	\$33,548,787	12%	42%	\$8,970	2%	5%
FY12 Last 6 Months	4,307	15%	26%	\$37,863,097	13%	26%	\$8,791	-2%	0%
FY13 First 6 Months	4,811	12%	29%	\$40,198,501	6%	20%	\$8,356	-5%	-7%
Fiscal Years Increments									
FY09	1,225	na	na	\$11,359,575	na	na	\$9,273	na	na
FY10	2,495	na	104%	\$32,261,684	na	184%	\$12,931	na	39%
FY11	3,741	na	50%	\$53,561,288	na	66%	\$14,317	na	11%
FY12	4,790	na	28%	\$71,411,884	na	33%	\$14,909	na	4%

Note: Values for FY12 and FY13 not estimated to completion.

The ECHO Tutor Demonstration Program officially started March 15, 2008. However, no significant program expenditures occurred until the first six months of FY09.

Users Reaching the Annual ECHO Expenditures Cap

In FY09 a total of 47 ECHO beneficiaries had expenditures above \$35,000 per year (close to the \$36,000 annual ECHO fiscal year cap). Another 135 beneficiaries had expenditures between \$30,000 and \$35,000 in FY09. By the end of FY12, the number of ECHO beneficiaries that had expenditures above \$35,000 per year had increased over FY09 levels to 309 users. Another 622 beneficiaries had expenditures between \$30,000 and \$35,000 in FY12. Thus, the percentage of users with expenditures above \$30,000 increased from 8 percent in FY09 to 14 percent in FY12.

Providers

Based on contractor submitted reports, the number of providers participating in the tutor demonstration continues to steadily increase. Compared with the year before, ABA supervisors increased by 28 percent (from 1881 to 2416) and ABA tutors increased by 5 percent (from 9201 to 9680) over the same period in FY 2012 (1 October 2011- 31 March 2012).

The ECHO tutor demo program started in March of 2008—the program was designed by TRICARE in response to a relative shortage of BACB-certified BCBA providers throughout the US, particularly in the West MCS contract region. Therefore, the total number of BCBA providers by region in the U.S. that are registered with the Behavioral Analyst Certification Board (based upon certificants registered by state which is available on BACB's website) was examined. Since 2005, there has been tremendous growth in the number of BCBAs. Across the U.S., the number of BACB-certified BCBA providers grew by 365 percent from 2005 to August

of 2013—more than 8,500 providers have been added to the ranks of the 2,328 that existed in 2005. Growth has been the most pronounced in the West MCS region where earlier shortfalls were the greatest—today, a total of 2,481 BCBA's have been added to a 2005 base of 481 implying a growth rate of 516 percent over the time period (see Table 29). The West MCS region now has 22 percent more providers than the South MCS region.

Growth in Board Certified Behavior Analysts by MCS Contract Region^{1/}				
	North	South	West	Total
BACB-Certified BCBA Providers				
2005	1,081	766	481	2,328
2007	1,659	1,072	696	3,427
2012	4,503	2,145	2,395	9,043
2013 (August)	5,436	2,433	2,962	10,831
% Growth in BCBA Providers Since 2005				
2007	53%	40%	45%	47%
2012	317%	180%	398%	288%
2013 (August)	403%	218%	516%	365%

1/ The Behavioral Analyst Certification Board's (BACB's) website (bacb.com) provides information regarding all certified BCBA's by state.

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. However, the percentage of beneficiaries who are at or near the \$36,000 cap is rising and is cause for concern. TRICARE will continue to monitor this trend.

TRICARE continues to increase access to ABA services and is leading the nation in fielding an effective ABA provision model. Although the number of BCBA's nationwide has progressively increased, TRICARE remains concerned about the national shortfall in available BCBA's. 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 and might best be led by other Departments.

Report to Congress



The Department of Defense Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration July 2013 Semiannual Report to Congress

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