



6201 Benton Rd Paducah, KY 42003 • Phone: (270)908-0461 • Fax: (270)366-0780  
Email: [info@bloombehavior.com](mailto:info@bloombehavior.com) • [www.bloombehavior.com](http://www.bloombehavior.com)

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October 11, 2022

To the Kentucky Medicaid Oversight and Advisory Committee:

I am writing this statement in hopes that you please consider increasing the rates for applied behavior analysis services and in particular the rates associated with a Registered Behavior Technician or 'RBT'. I believe that we can do better for some of our most vulnerable citizens in the commonwealth and the families that support them. Everyday I work with people impacted by the incredibly complex and sometimes debilitating mental health diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. I have a long waitlist, as do the small number of other ABA providers around me, and operating in a rural setting makes it especially difficult for people to access services here. As a business, if we cannot afford to pay the people who serve as the direct interventionists (i.e. RBT's) in our field competitive wages, we cannot provide adequate treatment. Autism can be a pervasive condition that requires early and evidence-based treatment to achieve outcomes that allow a person to live a happy, healthy, and independent life. Through improved research and advocacy, we can now reliably detect the disorder by 18 months of age. Effective and specialized treatment, which is what ABA is, should be started around one to two years of age, or as soon as a child is diagnosed. This allows therapists to help establish successful communication and social interaction, and to prevent the development of a host of challenging behaviors that left untreated can lead to very dangerous outcomes. If people can't access services right away, the challenge becomes undoing dysfunctional behavior patterns that have been strengthened over the course of many years. I testify to you today that beginning therapy with a child who is already five or six even, rather than starting early at age two is a whole different ballgame. I started a child at age nine a few weeks ago and while I hope to have a positive impact on this boy's life, I look at him knowing precious time has been wasted and if he had the chance to access treatment earlier on, there would be a whole world of opportunities available to him that now may not be. People with autism can go to school, they can have friends, they can live on their own, and their families can go through life without enduring the stress, worry and suffering that comes from wondering when the next crisis with their child will occur. Please see this population and the challenges associated with it as important enough to invest in. It is difficult enough to find people who make it their passion to improve the lives of those with complex mental health conditions, and all we are asking is that they can be adequately compensated for their work.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Becky L. Nastally". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Becky Nastally, PhD, BCBA-D, KY Licensed Behavior Analyst