



## LICENSURE FOR BEHAVIORAL ANALYSTS AND ASSISTANTS

The Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (TSHA) has a membership of more than 5,500 speech-language pathologists and audiologists statewide and is the recognized authority on the delivery of life-changing therapies to consumers throughout Texas. TSHA supports legislation that protects consumers who have communication disorders and works to ensure that speech-language pathologists and audiologists provide the highest quality evaluation, habilitation, and rehabilitation services.

### **Regarding legislation to establish the Texas Board of Behavior Analysts Examiners and the requirement to obtain a license to practice as a behavior analyst or assistant.**

- There is a growing trend in both education and health care settings to utilize Applied Behavior Analysts (ABA) to provide services to children identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).
- TSHA does not oppose the use of ABA services; however, singling it out in legislation as the only treatment for behavioral health issues for individuals with developmental disabilities – including those with ASD – limits consumer choice.
- According to reports from speech-language pathologists, a growing number of students with ASD are being denied necessary school-based speech and language services, particularly as they relate to “language” therapy.
- Regarding Medicaid coverage, some states have requested and been granted waivers that place ABA therapists as the sole gatekeepers for ASD services to children, effectively eliminating other service options for the families of children with autism. Both the CMS and U.S. Department of Education have issued guidance on this concern.
- The U.S. Department of Education’s guidance document recognizes the importance of speech-language pathology services and the necessary role of a speech-language pathologist in both evaluation and treatment of children with ASD.
- ABA services are often billed under speech-language pathology codes, which is inappropriate.

**Requested Action:** TSHA respectfully requests that members of the Texas Legislature **OPPOSE** Senate Bill 589 introduced by Senator Eddie Lucio and House Bill 26 introduced by Representative Ron Simmons.

**Contact Information:** We look forward to working collaboratively this legislative session. For questions about information contained in this briefing, please contact Larry Higdon, Director of Governmental Relations (lwhtsha@gmail.com), Mark Hanna, Legislative & Legal Counsel (mhanna@markjhanna.com), or Shannon Butkus, Vice President for Social & Governmental Policy (government@txsha.org).