

# Behavioral Health Handbook



We're creating a more equitable world so people with developmental disabilities can choose their path. We do this by reimagining how care and support can be better connected to fill gaps in human services across an individual's lifespan.





You can view the handbook anytime on [esnorcal.org](https://www.esnorcal.org) on the Behavioral Health webpage.



# Welcome

Welcome to the Easterseals Northern California Behavioral Health Program. This handbook is provided to you as a resource, giving you information about your rights and responsibilities while receiving services from us and providing an overview of our program. We believe that the partnership between you and the Easterseals Northern California team is essential to meet the needs of your loved one.

## Our Purpose and Values

At Easterseals Northern California (ESNorCal), we're creating a more equitable world so people with developmental disabilities can choose their path. We do this by reimagining how care and support can be better connected to fill gaps in human services across an individual's lifespan.

Values shape the culture and define the character of Easterseals Northern California. Values guide how we, as an organization, behave and are the standards by which we make decisions. As an organization, our values are:

<b>Bold</b>	<b>Equity- informed</b>	<b>Community- centered</b>	<b>Wellbeing- Driven</b>
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## **Who is a Caregiver?**

A “caregiver” is any person who regularly looks after someone. This could be a parent, a grandparent, an aunt or a legal guardian.

## **Our Promise to You**

We will provide exceptional, individualized, family-centered services to empower children and adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities, and children who are at risk for developmental delays, to achieve their goals and live independent, fulfilling lives. Our services are voluntary and at any time you can refuse, decline or withdraw from them at any time.

## Who is Easterseals Northern California?

Easterseals Northern California (ESNorCal) is part of Catalight Care Services, a network of behavioral health and therapy providers. ESNorCal is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with the purpose of creating a more equitable world so people with intellectual or developmental disabilities can choose their path. We do this by reimagining how care and support can be better connected to fill gaps in human services across an individual's lifespan. ESNorCal provides comprehensive, evidence-based therapies to individuals living with disabilities from birth through adulthood and their families.

Our services include Early Intervention, a Community Adult Program, Behavioral Health and Respite. All ESNorCal's service lines have been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International for our quality of programming.

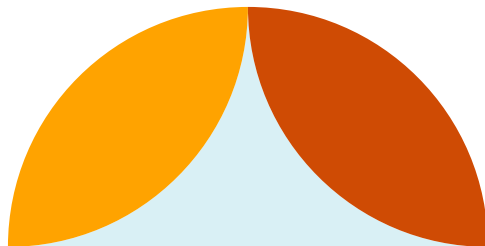
For a complete list of services that we offer, please visit [www.esnorcal.org](http://www.esnorcal.org).

## **We Promise to:**

- Listen to and respect your perspectives and choices
- Provide clear and transparent communication
- Communicate and share complete and unbiased information with you in ways that are useful
- Integrate your knowledge, experiences, values, beliefs and cultural backgrounds into the planning and delivery of services
- Encourage and support your participation in your loved one's care

## **Anti-Discrimination Statement**

Easterseals Northern California believes that everyone should be treated equally. We provide the same level of care to our clients regardless of their race, gender expression, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or any other factor that makes them uniquely themselves.





**tip**

**Set aside quiet time to review the handbook.** The information in this handbook is important. Please take time to read all the information.

## **Behavioral Health Handbook Content and Organization**

In this Handbook, you will find information about:

- ESNorCal Clinical Services
- Programs ESNorCal provides for treatment
- Your role in treatment planning

## **Do You Have Questions?**

If you have any questions, contact a member of your loved one's supervision team. We want to make sure all clients, parents and others in a client's life understand how ESNorCal can improve the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities – including autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

## What's Next?

**STEP 1:** Review the contents of this handbook.

**STEP 2:** Review, sign, date and return the following forms.

- Consent to Services
- Telehealth Consent Form (optional)
- Media Release Form (optional)
- Handbook Acknowledgement Form

### **IMPORTANT:**

Throughout this handbook, you will see “Tip” sections. Tips offered in the handbook include helpful information and proven strategies.



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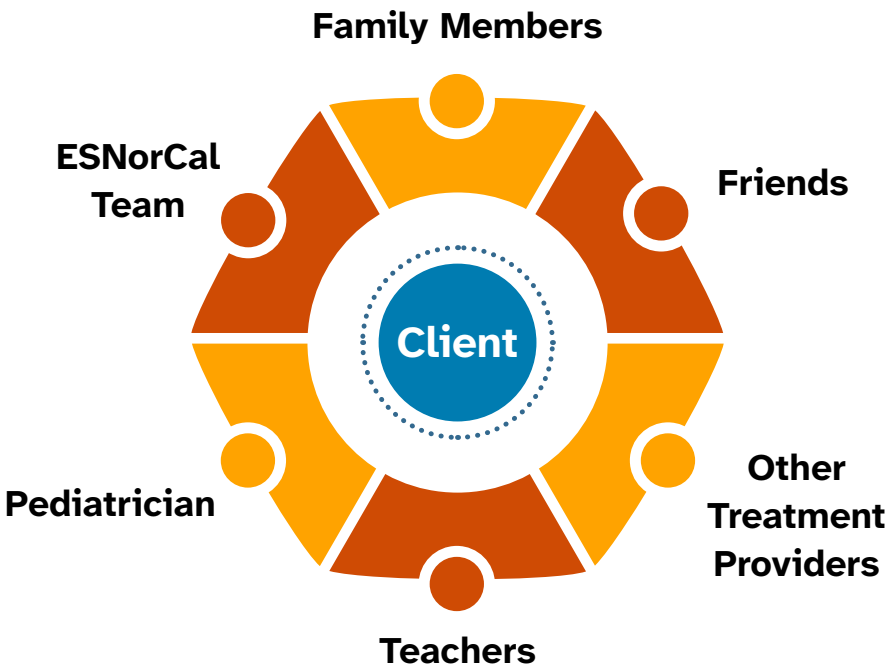
# Our Client-Centered and Family-Involved Approach

## We Believe in a Client-centered Philosophy

Each client and caregiver is an important member of the treatment team.

You know your loved one best, so we recognize your knowledge and experience. This will help us reach better outcomes for someone with an intellectual or developmental disability.

For treatment to work well, it is important for caregivers and others who are close to your child to participate in treatment sessions.





**tip**

**All caregivers should understand all treatments.** It is helpful for everyone involved in your loved one's care to understand all the treatments delivered. If your loved one gets medical or educational services from several providers, let us know what other services are being received.

## **An Introduction to Our Clinical Services**

### **Who is Easterseals Northern California?**

Easterseals Northern California (ESNorCal) is an affiliate of Easterseals, Inc. We have proudly served thousands of individuals and families in many Northern California counties since 1927. Our services include Behavioral Health, Early Intervention, a Community Adult Program and Respite. All ESNorCal's service lines have been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International for our quality of programming.

## What Funding Sources Do We Accept?

ESNorCal partners with Kaiser Permanente, the California Regional Centers and other funding sources. Together with these partners, we provide treatment services. For a complete list of services we offer, visit [esnorcal.org](https://www.esnorcal.org).



### Key Terms

Key Terms used in the Handbook help explain important topics throughout. You can also find the Key Terms at the end of the Handbook.

#### **Client**

Any individual who receives necessary treatment services from ESNorCal.

#### **Evidence-Based Therapies**

Treatments that:

- Are shown to be effective based on extensive and well-designed research
- Produce consistently positive outcomes

#### **Funding Source**

The organization that is responsible for paying for services which are provided through ESNorCal.

## What is the Nature of Our Services?

Everyone is unique. That's why clients at ESNorCal receive services that are personalized and designed specially to meet their needs. A treatment team is assigned to each client and is responsible for creating each client's treatment plan.

ESNorCal teams include professionals called practitioners. These practitioners are specialists in working with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). At least one ESNorCal supervisor or manager (members of the supervising team) leads each treatment team. Our supervisors and managers oversee all treatment services.

Every supervisor and manager at ESNorCal has advanced training and/or is certified according to the laws and regulations for providing Behavioral Health services.

## Services We Offer

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
  - Paraprofessional ABA
  - Caregiver-Led ABA
  - Social Skills Groups
- Caregiver Training
- Chat
- Connect
- Compass-Behavioral
- RUBI

## **Methods of Service Delivery**

- Telehealth
- In-person
- Hybrid

## **Can I Get Interpreter Services?**

Do you have Kaiser Permanente as your funding source? If so, our Clinical Services offer interpreter services to clients and parents with limited English skills. The Language Assistance Line is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you would like to use this service, please ask your practitioner for help.

## **Practitioner Background Check Requirements**

As a direct care services provider, we take measures to ensure client safety. ESNorCal recognizes this fact and requires employees to be fingerprinted, which is part of the guidelines of the California Department of Social Services. The U.S. Department of Justice will notify ESNorCal if any violations occur. This is in effect during the entire time that a practitioner has a job with ESNorCal. In addition, ESNorCal performs routine screening of all employees to ensure that new hires and existing employees are not on any state and federal exclusion lists.



## Key Terms

### **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**

ABA is a process used to help us understand how learning takes place. A wide variety of ABA techniques are used to help clients with ASD learn new skills.

### **Hybrid**

Hybrid services are a combination of in-person and virtual sessions via telehealth.

### **Practitioner**

Any individual who provides services to ESNorCal clients.

### **Services**

Clinical services (direct or indirect) provided to clients.

### **Sessions**

The time during which a client receives services from ESNorCal.

### **Supervising Team**

The Supervising Team is the program supervisor (PS) and the clinical manager (CM). The CM is responsible for developing your loved one's treatment plan.

Together, the PS and CM make sure of two things: that your loved one's treatment plan is followed and that they are making progress.

### **Telehealth**

Any clinical service provided virtually via video, such as Zoom.

## Excellence and High Standards

We are committed to excellence and high standards of clinical care for our clients. Our practitioners are credentialed and/or experienced in working with clients with disabilities.

ESNorCal follows all laws and regulations required for each of our practitioners' positions. In addition, we require all practitioners to participate in ongoing training about:

- Current research and treatment approaches in the field
- Cultural awareness and understanding of the diverse populations that ESNorCal serves

Practitioners also receive direct training through supervision and observation during sessions. Furthermore, our tuition reimbursement program affords practitioners the opportunity to attend additional training programs outside of ESNorCal's required training for personal and professional development.



## **Innovation**

One of our guiding principles is innovation, where we often seek better ways to work and provide services. We do this to continuously enhance the quality of care we provide and to improve the satisfaction of our clients and their families. As part of our commitment to innovation, you may occasionally be invited to use one of our digital tools during treatment. For instance, we offer smartphone and tablet apps designed to keep you and your loved one informed and engaged throughout the care process.

One such tool is the free myBrightlink app, which you may be asked to download to your smartphone. This app lets you communicate directly with your care and scheduling teams and track treatment progress.

## **Collaborative Approach**

How do we serve clients better? We encourage practitioners from different professional disciplines to work together and share their skills. Through this collaboration, we can help clients and caregivers reach the goals that they desire. Besides input from the ESNorCal team, we may ask other professionals in a client's life, like a teacher or pediatrician, for their suggestions. Professionals, family members, friends and the client all share valuable information, so we want to hear from the client and all the important people in their life.

## Client's Voice

Every client has a voice. While some may not be able to express their wants and needs verbally, others may communicate through their actions or behaviors. No matter how a client communicates, we believe it is very important to listen and respond with empathy and understanding. Throughout the assessment and treatment process, the ESNorCal treatment team remains committed to honoring each client's voice — actively listening and adapting care to meet their individual needs.



tip

**Consistency is key.** Progress is often more successful when you practice treatment strategies outside of session times. Ask your care team for ideas if you need help practicing what you learn in treatment.



## Key Terms

### **Responsible Adult**

A person who is a guardian or any individual who is:

- 18 years old or older
- Capable of providing care for the client in the caregiver's absence
- Approved by the caregiver to provide care for the client in the caregiver's absence

### **Guardian**

Someone who is authorized to make medical decisions for a client or on behalf of a client. This could be a caregiver. It may also be another person responsible for the client's medical decisions, such as a grandparent or legal guardian.

## **Siblings, Friends and Peers**

At ESNorCal, we believe siblings, friends, and peers also matter. We may involve siblings, friends and other key people in a client's treatment. Our practitioners will ensure treatment sessions include appropriate people who will benefit the client. It is important for ESNorCal practitioners to be able to focus attention on the client's treatment. It is also important for the client's caregiver to be fully present during a session. For that reason, if a client's siblings and/or peers are present at their session, a responsible adult must be there for supervision.

## Individualized Treatment and Families

We create an individualized treatment plan to serve the needs of the client. Sessions focus not only on improving client skills, but also on empowering families and caregivers. We encourage caregivers to be active participants during the entire treatment process. This includes every session.

## Caregiver Training

Practitioners assigned to the client's case will work with the client and caregivers to decide the level of participation needed to reach treatment goals. Practitioners will offer training and coaching on how clients and caregivers can work on treatment during and outside of sessions. Participation may include coaching on how to respond, or when not to respond, to certain client behaviors.



**tip**

**Don't go through it alone!** Join a caregiver support group online or in person. Reach out to friends or your community for support.



# Your Loved One's Treatment Path With ESNorCal



## What is Treatment?

- A short-term opportunity for working on targeted goals
- Intended for gaining skills and resources that are needed to manage the symptoms of autism or other developmental disability
- An important time for clients and families to build their skills
- Different for every client who comes to ESNorCal for treatment

## Treatment

The first treatment period usually lasts about six months. The total treatment length usually lasts two years or less.

During treatment, the team working with your loved one will follow the treatment plan developed during the assessment.

If you are concerned about the treatment plan at any time or if your loved one is not making progress, please talk with your supervising team.

## Reassessment

Every six months, we reassess your loved one. At this reassessment, we use the same measures as during the first assessment. This shows how much progress your loved one has made. At each reassessment, we will talk about graduation from treatment or transition to another type of treatment.



**tip**

**Don't forget to schedule time for your loved one's sessions.** When beginning services, look at your family's daily schedule and determine if it needs to be changed to make time for your loved one's treatment sessions.



# Your Loved One's Treatment Team

ESNorCal uses a team approach. Depending on the services being provided, your team may be a blend of the practitioners below.

## Your Loved One's Practitioners

### **Behavior Interventionist**

- Provides direct treatment based on your loved one's treatment plan

### **Program Supervisor**

- Provides training to caregivers or other practitioners on implementing your loved one's treatment plan

### **Clinical Manager**

- Meets with clients or caregivers each month to discuss progress and review treatment plans
- Oversees all practitioners who are on the team
- Responsible for the development, implementation and overall success of your loved one's treatment plan

## ESNorCal Clinical Leadership

- Manages services and employees, and ensures service quality and customer service
- Oversees program operations and clinical quality throughout a region's offices
- Provides clinical consultation for high needs cases
- Supervises practitioners and ensures service quality
- Acts as an escalation point for any concerns or questions

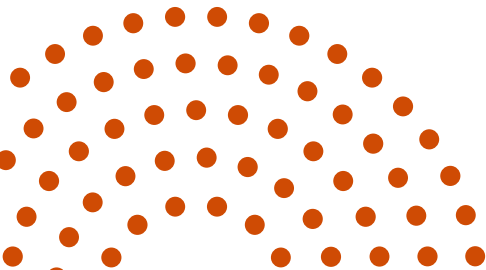
## Discharge

Being discharged means ending the episode of care with ESNorCal. Planning for the discharge process starts as soon as the client begins receiving services. A client “graduates” when they and their family have the skills they need to keep improving on their own. At this point, they no longer need our regular services.

In some cases, however, we may need to discharge a client for other reasons, such as not following ESNorCal or funding source policies and requirements. We may also discharge clients if treatment is not progressing as recommended.

Here are some examples of why a client may be discharged for other reasons:

- Attends/participates in sessions inconsistently and/or cancels too many sessions
- Late to treatment sessions or leaves sessions early
- Is unresponsive to contact attempts (by phone, email, etc.)
- Does not provide needed documentation related to consent, custody or other issues that affect our ability to provide treatment
- Refuses or declines clinically recommended treatment
- Caregiver behavior towards staff, such as yelling, profanity or personal insults, interferes with the client's progress and creates barriers to effective treatment delivery
- Tells ESNorCal that they do not want services anymore
- Moves outside of the funding source's coverage area or ESNorCal territory, and can no longer access services



ESNorCal works with clients and/or caregivers to take care of any issues before a client is discharged. When possible and recommended, Catalight Care Services may refer a client to another provider for treatment.

**tip**

**Understand the plan.** Understanding the treatment plan is important to your loved one's success. Just ask us if you don't understand part of the plan. Your loved one's supervising team is here to help you understand your loved one's treatment plan.





# An In-Depth Look at Treatment Sessions

## Treatment Sessions

A responsible adult over the age of 18 must be present at all sessions.

A Responsible Adult must take care of:

- Feeding (oral or tube)
- Bathroom routines (diaper changing or potty training)
- Monitoring the health and safety of the client
- Monitoring the health and safety of any peer or sibling under their supervision
- The client's safety during an emergency or crisis

### **IMPORTANT: RESPONSIBLE ADULT REQUIRED**

Your session will be canceled if no Responsible Adult is present at any time during a session outside of ESNorCal clinic sessions.

The Responsible Adult is also responsible for communicating feedback and treatment information to the client's parent or caregiver.



**tip**

**Keep phone numbers handy.** Add the phone numbers for each of your loved one's supervising team members to your phone, along with the Easterseals Northern California Customer Service number, 855.843.2476, and email address, [CustomerService@esnorcal.org](mailto:CustomerService@esnorcal.org).

## **How to Schedule a Treatment Session**

We are required to offer every family a complete schedule offer. A full schedule offer means we provide all the hours your insurance or funding allows. These sessions will be scheduled at times when your loved one is not in school, based on their age, and/or IEP and medical appointments. We schedule all sessions outside of legally mandated hours. This does not include daycare, after-school programs or extracurricular activities (sports, tutoring, etc.). ESNorCal can provide visit verifications as documentation to your employer if needed. Please read our scheduling policy and let us know if you have questions.

## **In-Between Sessions**

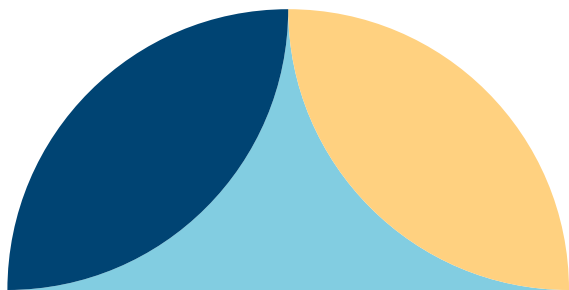
Your treatment team will give you activities, strategies, and techniques to work on between sessions and throughout the treatment period. Working on skills between sessions will make a big difference in your loved one's response to treatment. Practice the skills your loved one is learning in treatment. If you can, make them part of your loved one's everyday routine. For example, you can read picture books at home and have your loved one point to various pictures in the book if the treatment team is working on increasing your loved one's ability to identify objects.

### **IMPORTANT: PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!**

Treatment is not a long-term solution but rather a short-term opportunity to obtain the skills and resources needed to manage the symptoms of autism or other developmental disability. The more you help your loved one practice new skills, the more independent your loved one will become.

## How to Work With Your Loved One Between Sessions

- Set aside time to work on skills.
- If you have other young children in the home, find someone to watch them while you interact with your loved one receiving services.
- Work in small amounts of time. Stop if you or your loved one gets tired.
- Take advantage of incidental opportunities. This could happen naturally while you and your loved one are doing daily tasks. For example, your loved one may be learning how to ask for items or make requests. If you know they want something like a cookie, keep it just out of reach so they can ask for it when they want it.
- If you encounter a problem and aren't sure how to handle it, please don't hesitate to reach out. Your loved one's treatment team will help you find a solution that works for you and your loved one.





## tip

### **Focus on the desired behavior.**

Explaining or trying to reason with someone who is upset is difficult. For many caregivers, this goes against how we would want to respond. For example, we want to reason, explain and force. Instead, focus on the behavior you want to see. Simple prompts such as, “When you are calm, we will go to the park,” can help.

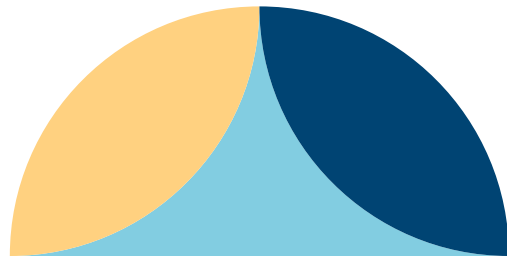
## **Service Method Delivery**

ESNorCal primarily provides services via telehealth. This has been supported by multiple research studies, noting its effectiveness in improving treatment outcomes. When clinically recommended, we also offer a hybrid service delivery model combining in-person and telehealth sessions. In the hybrid model, one practitioner may be in person, while the other provides supervision via telehealth. The method of service delivery will be determined by your clinical team’s recommendation.

Before engaging families in telehealth, a team member will provide instructions to the family on the equipment used for service delivery, including features, setup, use, maintenance, safety considerations, infection control and troubleshooting. Further, if a family has questions about telehealth at ESNorCal, they can contact a member of the supervision team. If it is after normal operating hours, families can expect a response within two business days.

## **Treatment Session Settings and Environment**

We care about the safety of our clients and staff. We reserve the right to evaluate any setting before approving it. We also reserve the right to re-evaluate the location at any time to determine whether it is suitable. The setting can be rejected at the sole discretion of the staff member if and they feel the environment is unsafe, poses a health hazard or could subject the client or staff member to any kind of harassment.



ESNorCal reserves the right to discontinue providing services in a home or any other environment where our criteria is not met. In these cases, a supervisor or manager will directly address the concern with the client, caregivers, or other responsible adult to help resolve the safety issue, if possible. If the safety issue cannot be resolved, it may result in the end of the episode of care.

## **Maintaining a Safe and Respectful Environment**

Maintaining a safe and respectful environment is essential for both clients and ESNorCal employees. We do not tolerate inappropriate behavior toward our employees, including yelling, threats or any conduct that creates an unsafe or hostile atmosphere.

ESNorCal employees have the right to pause or end sessions, leave a setting or refer clients back to the funder if these behaviors occur.

We ask all families to help us uphold these standards so that everyone can work together in a safe, respectful, and supportive space.

## Special Costs

When a client or caregiver requests the participation of practitioners during a session with an activity or setting that is outside of the home or clinic, the client or caregiver is responsible for any cost required for the practitioner's participation (for example, a zoo or park entrance fee, etc.). This cost is to be paid at the time of the activity.

In addition, ESNorCal and practitioners are not financially responsible for any property damage incurred during treatment in the home or other setting.

There may be times when your clinical team may ask you to purchase certain materials to support your loved one's treatment plan. If there are financial constraints in purchasing these items, please inform your clinical team.

### **IMPORTANT: LIMITS ON ESNORCAL'S PRESENCE**

Allowing a client to attend or participate in any particular setting, such as preschool, daycare, school, lesson or class, cannot depend on ESNorCal's presence at that location.

## Scheduling

We understand how busy life can get. Please review our Scheduling Policy to learn about how we schedule sessions for our clients and if there is flexibility to fit your family's schedule. If you have any questions about our scheduling policies, contact [scheduling@esnorcal.org](mailto:scheduling@esnorcal.org).

**Availability:** When your loved one can have services outside of any legally mandated activities, such as school.

**Preference:** Any schedule preference will be considered based on clinical needs and treatment plan recommendations.

**Session Times:** Schedules will be offered in specific blocks of time to meet service demand most efficiently.

**Full Schedule:** The number of hours authorized by the funding source.

**Declined Hours:** Any scheduled hours offered to meet authorized treatment hours that are not accepted by the client and/or caregiver due to preference will count as declined hours. The authorization will be adjusted to reflect only the hours accepted. If the hours accepted are not adequate for meaningful progress, the clinical team may discuss alternative service options with the

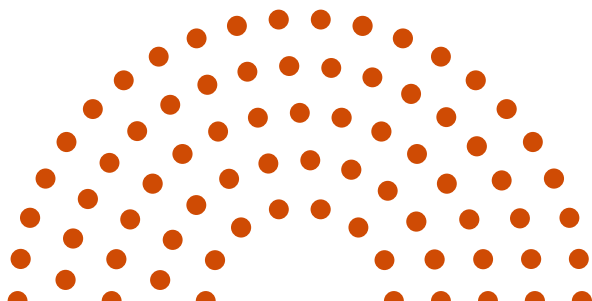
client or caregiver or recommend ending the episode of care. If you initially decline hours but later can accept them, you may do so. If additional hours are still clinically indicated, the clinical team will submit an addendum requesting increased hours.

**Schedule Changes:** ESNorCal will periodically allow clients and families to update their schedule preferences and availability.

**Approval of Changes:** Changes will be made based on scheduling guidelines and when the practitioner is available. Requests for schedule changes are never guaranteed. The scheduler, supervisor or manager will contact the client or caregiver regarding any requested schedule changes.

**Treating Practitioners:** The practitioners assigned to each client's case will be changed regularly. These changes support the ongoing generalization of your loved one's skill development.

The ESNorCal Scheduling Department can be reached at 925.266.8600.





# An Introduction to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

## ABA

For many clients who have ASD, a common treatment option is ABA. ABA is a scientific discipline that focuses on the principles of learning. Many factors can contribute to determining our behavior. One set of factors includes both our past and our current environments. Others are biological factors, such as our genetics. For example, if a child is rewarded (positively reinforced) for sitting at the table with the family at dinnertime, that child is more likely to want to sit at the table in the future. Similarly, if a child behaves poorly, the adults present can ignore it. The result is that the child will be less likely to repeat the behavior over time.

## SKILLS

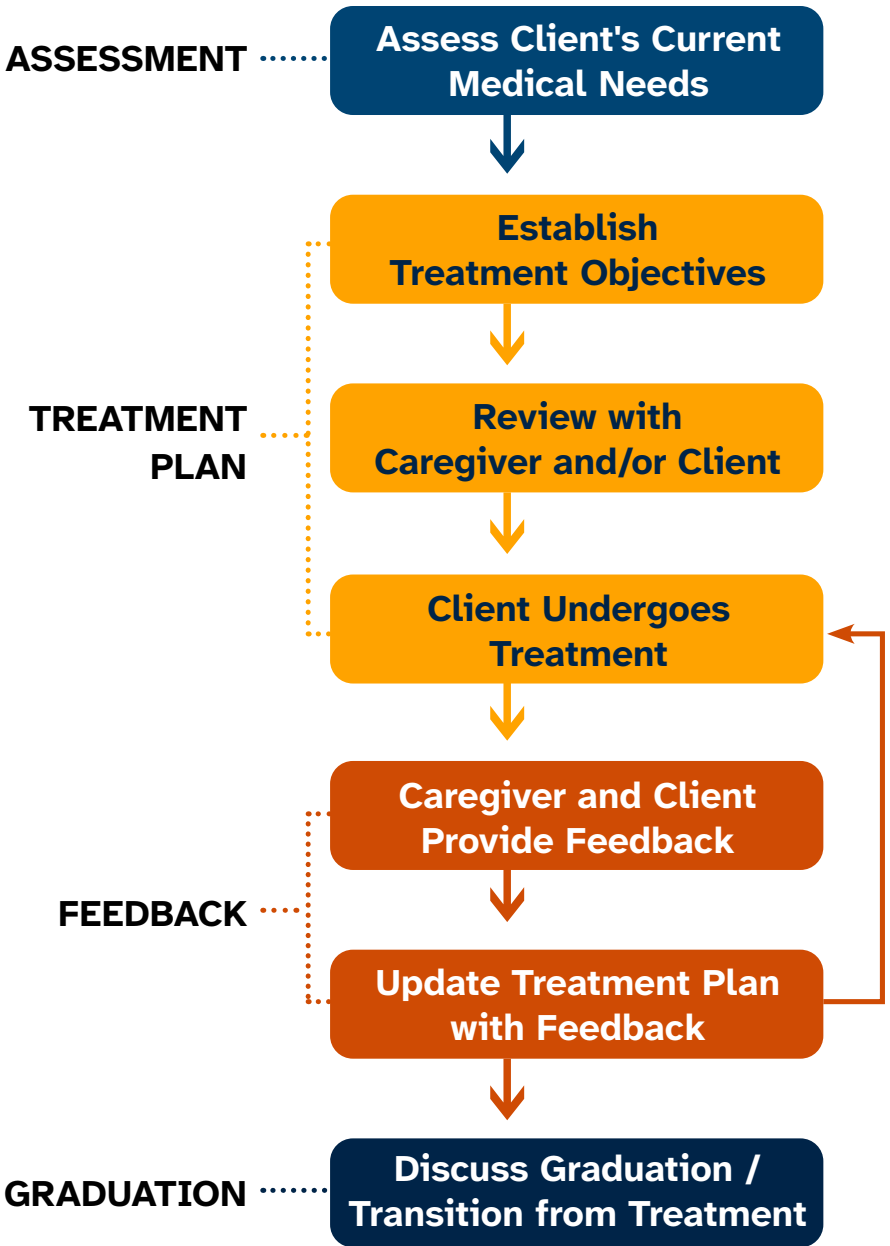
Learners with ASD can build useful skills using many ABA techniques. ABA programs focus on improving day-to-day behaviors. The goal is to help someone with ASD become more independent. When a client with ASD learns new skills, the treatment team will reinforce desired behaviors and ignore or interrupt undesired behaviors. These techniques are used in various situations that are structured and common, such as a family meal or playing at the neighborhood playground.



## ABA Assessment and Treatment Plan Development

As part of your loved one's ABA and Treatment Plan, we will perform assessments over several appointments with you and your loved one to better understand their current medical needs. You are a very important part of this process. We will ask for your feedback on your loved one and their treatment plan, and we will also talk to you about when your loved one will graduate or transition from ABA treatment.







# An Introduction to Chat

## Chat

Chat is a language-focused, naturalistic developmental treatment model designed for children aged 6 and under. It emphasizes building communication and social-emotional skills through everyday routines and familiar environments, such as a playroom or the dining table at home.

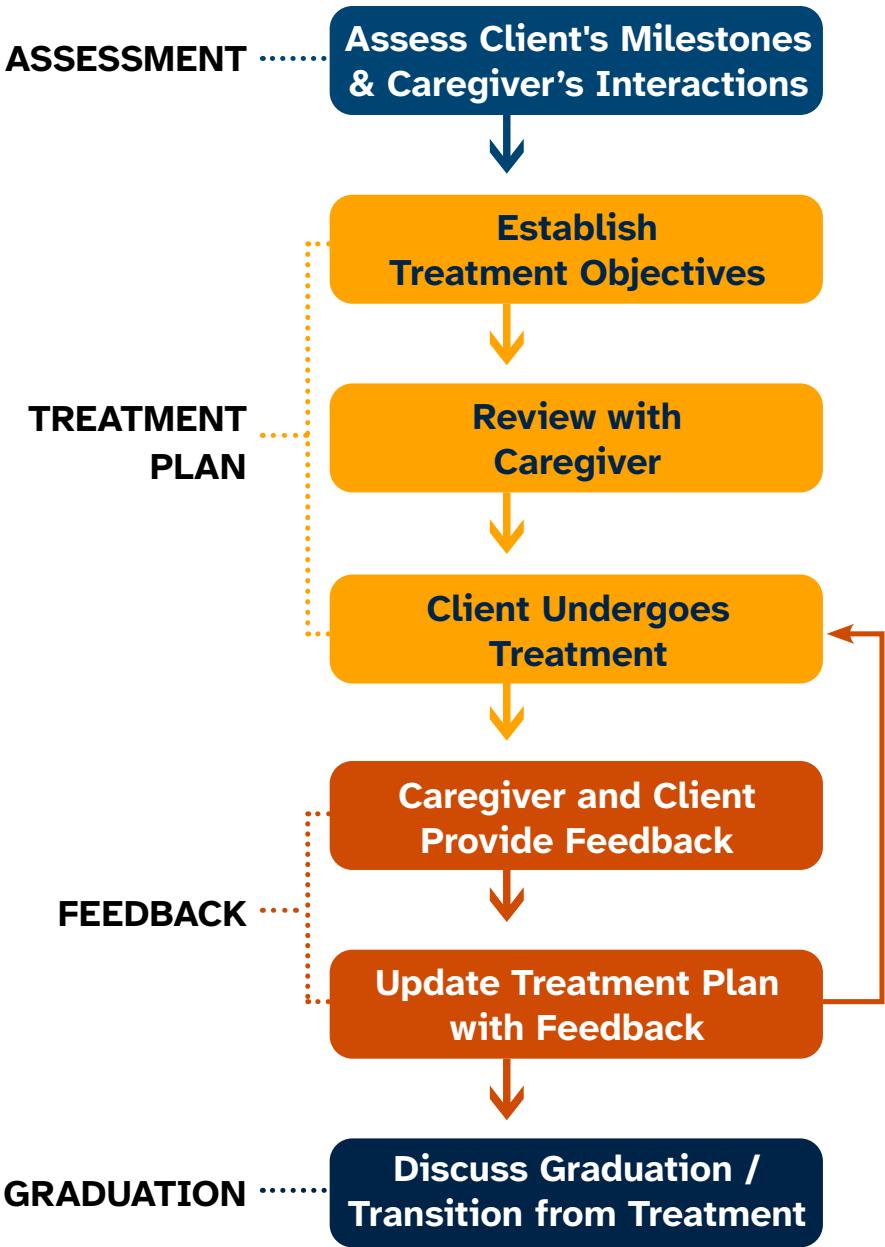
In this model, clinicians coach parents and caregivers to support their child's development in language, play, and social interaction, while also addressing challenging behaviors during daily activities. The goal is to foster expressive communication and emotional growth, while empowering caregivers with practical tools they can use throughout the day. For example, if a child has difficulty expressing discomfort — such as irritation from a shirt's fabric — trained caregivers can recognize the signs and help the child learn to communicate their needs, like pointing to the shirt to indicate the problem.

## Skills

Parents and caregivers will learn essential skills for child development, including how to track their loved one's milestones and identify learning opportunities in their daily routines. This can include jotting down every time their loved one points to something they want, or noting when they can introduce saying, "All done," after meals. Individual goals for each child are determined by what behavioral concerns each family has and what their family routines look like.

## Chat Assessment and Treatment Plan Development

As part of your loved one's Chat Treatment Plan, caregivers will fill out a Milestones Checklist and a behavior assessment. The clinician leading the assessment – the assessor – will observe the caregivers and their loved one interacting naturally together over the course of one or two meetings. The assessor will also ask about the child's current routines, how they play, any behaviors of concern, and the caregivers' goals and priorities for treatment.





# An Introduction to Connect

## Connect

This caregiver-mediated program focuses on people with profound intellectual multiple disabilities (PIMD) and increasing wellbeing for the family and the person with PIMD. This means that parents or caregivers learn how to teach their loved one new skills under the guidance of a clinical team. They will also learn to connect better to their loved one's needs and wants, such as the need to use the restroom or the desire to go outside or see a movie.

Individuals with PIMD may include those with a cognitive disability, physical limitations, or sensory impairment. The clinical team collaborates with the family to identify which skills are meaningful to them, and they focus on helping families gain confidence and independence to teach new skills to their loved one.

## Skills

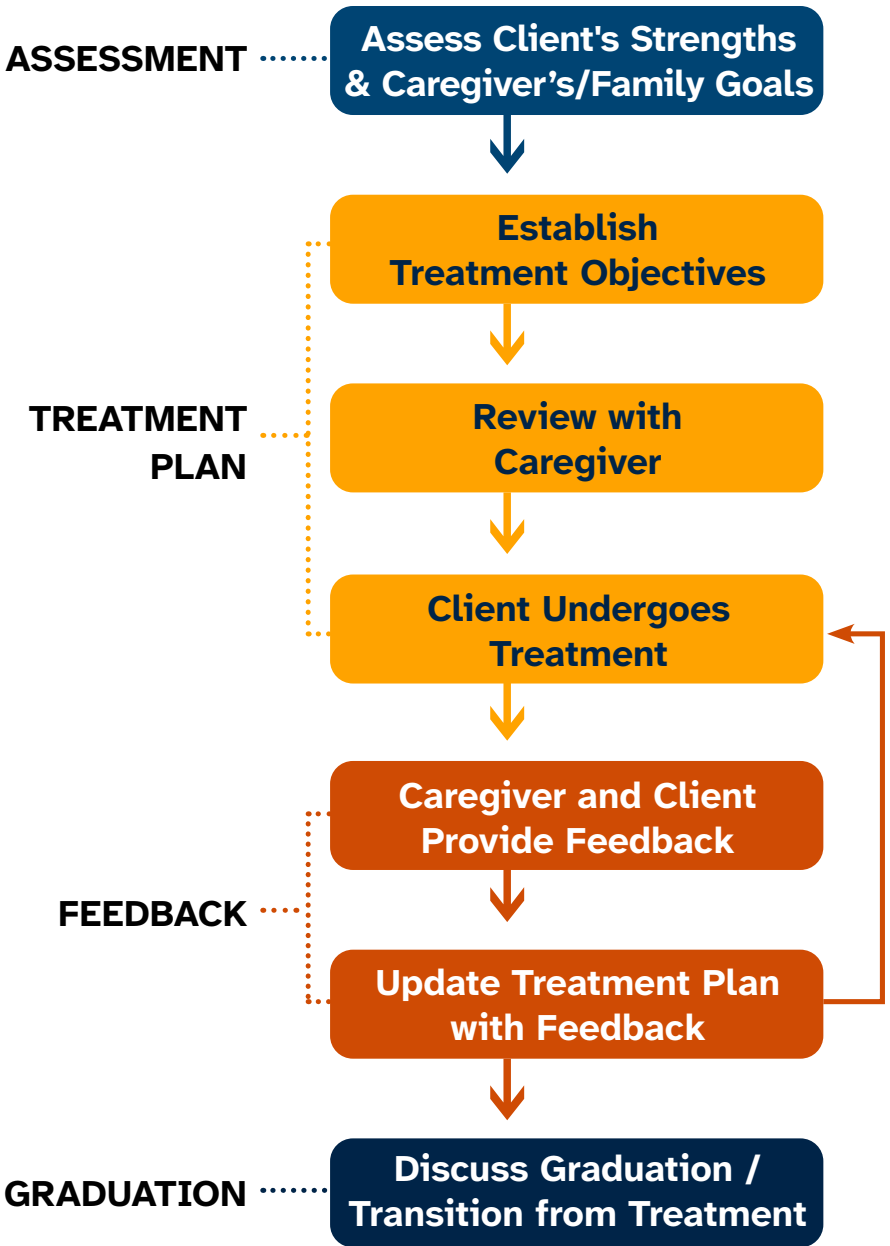
The goals of Connect are to improve communication skills so that the family has a better understanding of the client's wants and needs and can support the client's self-determination. The program can also help lower stress of parents and caregivers, increase their confidence in their own ability to interact with their loved one in meaningful ways, and increase their wellbeing as a family.



# Connect Assessment and Treatment Plan Development

The assessment for Connect includes a functional skills checklist to determine which areas to focus on during treatment. Functional skills include activities like getting dressed, brushing hair or teeth, and managing money. In Connect, your clinician will focus on your loved one's strengths to develop more skills. A sensory and behavioral assessment is also included to help identify other areas of focus. Treatment is focused on the needs and priorities of caregivers and the family unit as a whole, which can help guide the treatment plan.







# An Introduction to Compass-Behavioral

## Compass-Behavioral

Compass-Behavioral is a client-mediated program that focuses on improving the quality of life for youths who have challenges with organization and planning, social skills, and regulating emotions. For example, if a client needs help learning to get ready for school by themselves and improve how they share with their siblings, these could be areas to focus on during treatment. This program can be paired with family coaching.



## Skills

The clinician will work one-to-one with the client on the skills the client wants help with – a process called Behavior Mapping. This lets the client decide which improvements will help them in their daily life, such as self-management, self-advocacy, communication, navigating social situations, managing time, and observing their own emotions and behaviors. Treatment uses Behavior Mapping to look at the chain of events for a certain behavior. For example, if a client is struggling with social skills, the Behavior Mapping would look like this:

### INSTEAD OF...

- A** My friend was being too sensitive.
- B** I told my friend, "Don't be a baby, I'm just teasing."
- C** My friend ran away crying.

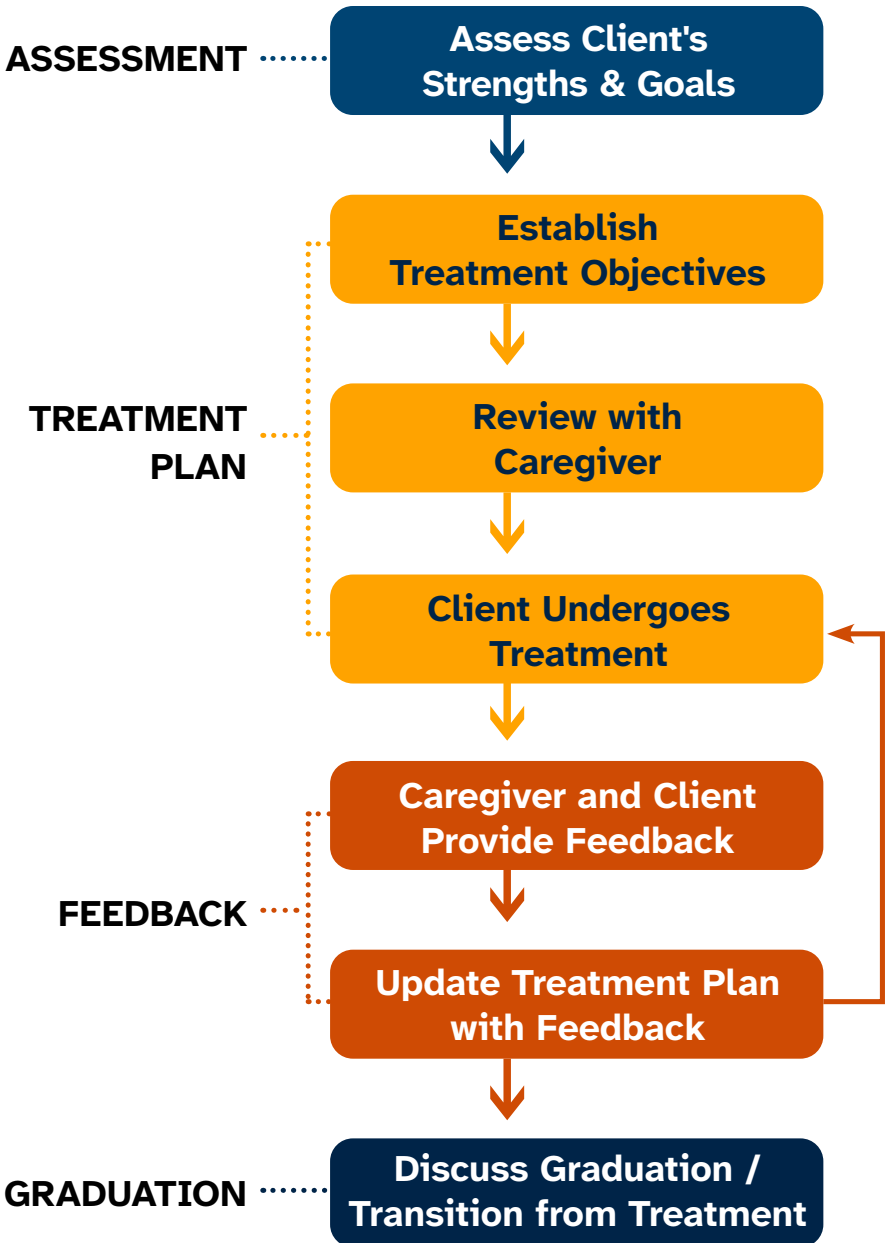
### LET'S TRY...

- A** My friend said I was saying mean things to them.
- B** I said sorry and used kinder words when I spoke to them.
- C** My friend accepted my apology and asked me to play with them.

# Compass-Behavioral Assessment and Treatment Plan Development

What makes Compass-Behavioral's treatment different is the self-observation piece of the program. Using a worksheet called the Compass Assessment Element, the client and clinician discover the client's strengths and determine what they want to work on in the program. Clients are actively involved in creating their own goals.







# How to Cancel a Treatment Session

## Cancellation Policy

Continued progress on treatment goals is a priority to ESNorCal. Depending on funder requirements, progress may be a requirement to continue receiving funding for treatment. Frequent cancellations or “no-shows” (when a client misses a session without prior notice) can have a negative effect on our ability to help a client make progress. We understand that the client, caregiver or ESNorCal may need to cancel sessions on occasion. However, when the number of cancellations or no-shows, for any reason, interferes with the treatment progress, ESNorCal will make a reasonable effort to work with the client and caregivers to find the most appropriate solution. We may also consult with the funding source regarding ending treatment if cancellations are excessive or if they interfere with the progress of treatment.



### tip

#### **Schedule changes can happen.**

Sometimes ESNorCal needs to make a scheduled change. When this happens, the scheduler and/or supervisor/manager will contact the client, parents, caregivers or guardians.

## **What to Do if You Have to Cancel a Treatment Session**

Follow these guidelines when cancelling a session:

- Provide as much notice as possible. Keep in mind that 24 hours or more is required.
- Communicate to the scheduler or cancel sessions by using the myBrightlink app, ESNorCal's client family companion app available in the Apple and Google Play stores. Do not communicate cancellations directly to practitioners.
- Provide details regarding the cancellation(s) – the number of sessions, dates, time and reason.
- When asking for a make-up session, refer to the Make-Up Sessions Guidelines.

## **How to Request a Treatment Hold**

We understand that life can be unpredictable. Sometimes your family may need to temporarily pause services. In that case, you may request a treatment hold with your practitioner or funding source. Treatment holds are typically up to 30 days. Upon returning from a hold, you may be assigned new practitioners and be provided with a new schedule offer. We do not hold practitioners or schedules beyond 2 weeks.

## **IMPORTANT: CANCELLATIONS**

Too many cancellations and no-shows by a client or family can lead to discharge from ESNorCal's services. Since these are medical services, they require consistency to be effective. Families can work with the Scheduling Department to secure make-up or substitute sessions.

### **When a Practitioner Cancels a Treatment Session**

Providing coverage for your regularly scheduled appointments when your care team members are not available is an important aspect of our service delivery to you. ESNorCal will make every effort to offer an alternate or proxy practitioner when your care team members are not available. We want to ensure that cancellations by your care team do not affect any client's treatment in an adverse way. For this reason, we encourage you to accept session offers from our proxy practitioners.

### **Make-Up Session Guidelines**

All make-up sessions are subject to the expectations of your specific funding source and the availability of the practitioners.

For client or caregiver-initiated cancellations, ESNorCal will offer a make-up session only if the required advance notice is provided and practitioners are available. Keep in mind that 24 hours or more advance notice is required.

For ESNorCal practitioner-initiated cancellations, ESNorCal will make every effort to provide a make-up session when possible if another practitioner cannot fill the regular session time. If a client or caregiver declines an offered make-up session for any reason, we will consider these hours as declined.

## General Information

### Holidays

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

In addition to the above holidays, the Behavioral Health Program may be closed for up to two business days per year for staff development and training. Holidays are subject to change and will be communicated in advance.



# Safety Comes First

## Ensuring the Safety of Clients and Practitioners

We want to ensure the health and safety of all clients and practitioners. Therefore, it's important to follow all policies, laws and regulations related to health and safety, including our sick policy, to reduce health and safety risks during treatment.

## Surveillance Cameras

To help maintain a safe and secure environment for all individuals on our property—children, families, visitors, employees, and caregivers—video surveillance is in use throughout all public areas. No audio is recorded. These cameras help us monitor activity, prevent incidents, and protect both people and property. By entering the premises, you acknowledge and give your implied consent to this safety measure.

## Sick Policy

If your loved one shows any signs of illness, please notify the program right away. In-person sessions should be canceled unless you have a note from a medical provider stating your loved one is well enough to attend.

To help keep everyone safe, your loved one must be symptom-free for at least 24 hours before resuming in-person sessions. If your loved one is sent home from school or childcare, or stays home due to illness without a doctor's note, their in-person session should also be canceled. A session can be rescheduled for a later date or switch to a telehealth session if appropriate.

If anyone else in the home is experiencing any signs of illness, we ask that a safe distance be maintained between the individual and ESNorCal staff to prevent transmission of any illness.

If your loved one or anyone in their home has a highly contagious disease, such as, but not limited to, COVID-19, Pink Eye, Strep, Impetigo (skin infection), or Hand-Foot-Mouth Disease, sessions must be cancelled. ESNorCal may request a note from a medical provider before resuming services.

If anyone in your household has head lice, please let us know and cancel sessions until they can be treated and nit-free.

## **IMPORTANT: SICK POLICY**

ESNorCal requires all clients and practitioners to strictly abide by the terms of the sick policy. Sessions will be cancelled and rescheduled if there is a risk of spreading illness and/or infection.

## **Response to Unsafe Client Behavior**

With input from clients and caregivers, practitioners develop treatment goals. They may also provide coaching on how to respond to unsafe and unhealthy client behavior in the most effective way. While practitioners may use gentle physical prompting based on specific treatment guidelines, they are prohibited from using any physical restraint on clients. The use of restraint during treatment is rare, and a multidisciplinary team, including ESNorCal Clinical Services Leadership and Catalight Care Services Clinical Leadership, must approve its use.

If a client's behavior escalates to a point that makes practitioners feel unsafe, ESNorCal encourages practitioners to remove themselves from any perceived danger. In the event a client is in immediate danger to themselves or others, ESNorCal staff will call 911.

## **Transportation Guidelines**

ESNorCal practitioners are responsible for their own transportation. Our practitioners cannot provide or accept transportation for clients and families.



# Your Rights and Responsibilities

**We are Committed to Protecting the Rights of Our Clients and Staff at All Times.**

## **You Have The Following Rights:**

- To receive services in a manner free from abuse, retaliation, humiliation, neglect and financial or other exploitation.
- To receive services voluntarily and of your own free will.
- To receive services that are sensitive to age, sexual orientation, race, cultural or religious preference, health status, and physical ability.
- To receive information that allows clients and caregivers to give informed consent before starting services.
- To refuse services offered after being notified of the benefits, alternatives and consequences.
- To be provided with access to or referral to self-help support services, advocacy services and legal entities for appropriate representation, when applicable.
- To be an informed participant by receiving information regarding services in a reasonably prompt and confidential manner.

- To access information and records in sufficient time to facilitate decision making, as outlined in the Notice of Privacy Practices. Our Notice of Privacy Practices is maintained at all times on our website, [www.esnorcal.org](http://www.esnorcal.org).
- To have the client's records protected as required by applicable privacy law, as described in our Notice of Privacy Practices.
- To receive relevant information regarding the individuals providing services, to the extent permitted by organizational policies and applicable privacy laws.
- To be provided on request, an accurate and current set of professional credentials of practitioners working with the client.
- To be provided with information on how to lodge complaints about professional practices of practitioners through the applicable professional licensing/credential board.
- To file a complaint without fear of retaliation or the imposition of any barrier to service.

To help your loved one get the most out of services, we ask that all Caregivers and Responsible Adults follow these important responsibilities:

- Be an active participant in your loved one's treatment.
- Join scheduled sessions and meetings.
- Use the strategies outlined in your loved one's treatment plan at home.
- Share your thoughts on your loved one's goals, progress, and any concerns.
- Help set and review goals with your loved one's care team.
- Keep us updated on any changes in your loved one's behavior or routine.
- Communicate with respect.
- Treat all staff with kindness and professionalism.
- Use respectful language and behavior during all interactions.
- If you have concerns, please follow the steps in our Complaint and Grievance section so we can support you appropriately.
- Maintain a safe and clean environment for in-home sessions.
- Provide a clean, quiet and safe space for services.
- Secure any fragile or valuable items away from the session space.

- Keep pets, hazardous materials and distractions out of the area being used for services.
- Make sure the space is comfortable and ready for your loved one and the practitioner.

## **Participation in Legal Matters**

Sometimes families who come to ESNorCal for services for their loved one are involved in legal matters such as divorce or custody proceedings. While we understand that these situations can be stressful for clients and families, it is important to know that we will remain neutral and not participate in any legal matters or disputes, including those involving clients, unless required by law or court order.

## **Mandated Reporting Laws in California**

The Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA) requires any ESNorCal practitioner to report any suspected abuse or neglect of any child. This could include a client's siblings.

The Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act requires any ESNorCal practitioner to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a dependent adult.

A dependent adult is anyone who, because of their physical or mental limitations, cannot care for themselves. This includes some adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

## Consent to Services

Obtaining valid informed consent for services is a necessary step in providing services to our clients. This is especially true when services may be based on a medical model and medical necessity. Clients and/or caregivers must provide written consent for the services before receiving them. This consent must be renewed each year.

Because obtaining accurate and complete documentation is essential to starting and/or continuing services, it is the responsibility of the caregiver to:

- Provide current, accurate information and/or documentation
- Notify ESNorCal about any custody or decision-making authority issues
- Update ESNorCal with relevant information if it changes



## **Minor Consent to Behavioral Health Services**

Starting July 1, 2024, under AB 665 and DHCS APL 24-019, minors in California who are 12 years or older may consent to or decline behavioral health services without parent or guardian permission, in certain situations.

Before any services begin, your practitioner must first evaluate whether the minor is mature enough to make informed decisions about their care. This includes looking at:

- Their understanding of the service
- Their ability to make thoughtful, informed choices
- Their emotional stability

## **What Families Should Know**

- Minors can say yes or no to services if they meet the maturity and understanding requirements.
- Parents may not be notified unless the minor agrees or there is a serious safety concern.
- We encourage family involvement when it is safe, helpful and supported by the minor.

## Our Process

- 1. Assessment:** We assess the minor's maturity and readiness for services.
- 2. Consent:** If appropriate, we explain services, answer questions, and obtain written consent.
- 3. Family Involvement:** We talk with the minor about whether they want a parent or guardian involved.
- 4. Care and Support:** If consent is given, we begin services and check in regularly.

We are committed to providing respectful, confidential care that supports minors while following California law, and we actively encourage caregiver involvement whenever it is safe, appropriate, and in the minor's best interest.

### Joint Custody/Decision-Making Authority

In cases involving joint custody and decision-making authority for a client, ESNorCal will assume either party with joint custody has independent authority to make medical decisions for the client and will primarily rely on the caregiver's consent when referring the client for treatment.

We will not suspend services due to the inability to contact a party holding joint custody. However, if ESNorCal is informed or otherwise reasonably believes that there is a disagreement related to medical decision-making between parties with joint medical decision-making authority, ESNorCal may suspend services for the party until the disagreement is resolved. ESNorCal may, in its sole discretion, require the caregiver or any other party who assert joint decision-making authority, to provide a certified copy of the document that establishes that party's decision-making authority, such as a court order regarding joint legal custody.

## **Capacity to Make Medical Decisions**

Sometimes a client cannot make their own medical or treatment decisions. This depends on the severity of the disability or on the age. If a client who is 18 years of age or older cannot make their own medical decisions, under California law, family and/or other caregivers must be included in all treatment plans. In addition, depending on the funding source of treatment, family or caregiver participation may be required for continued funding.

## **How to Authorize ESNorCal to Share Protected Health Information (PHI) and Request Medical Records**

It is our policy to send medical records only to clients or caregivers unless we are authorized to send them to other parties. Written authorization must be completed by the client or caregiver prior to releasing or sharing Personal Health Information (PHI).

### **To Get Authorization Forms:**

- Ask your treatment team via email, phone call or postal mail.
- Caregivers may authorize ESNorCal to share PHI with an individual or entity by completing the Authorization to Disclose PHI Form.
- Caregivers may complete a request to obtain a copy of the child's records by completing the Authorization to Release Form.

Clients and/or caregivers may revoke an authorization to disclose PHI except

- To the extent that we have already acted in reliance on the authorization, or
- If (a) the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage and (b) other law provides the insurer with the right to contest a claim under the policy or the policy itself.

## Photography and Video Recording

When possible, ESNorCal uses technology to raise the level of care that we offer to clients and families. This means using video or photography during treatment — or both. They are important tools to improve the quality of care. Video and photography enable practitioners to train and share information with clients or caregivers. We strive to use every available and appropriate way to improve services and achieve treatment goals. Your consent for ESNorCal to photograph and video-record treatment is an important step to help us accomplish this goal. However, this is voluntary. You may decline to sign this consent or have the right to revoke consent at any time without impact on treatment, payment or eligibility for benefits.

It is also a client right to attend virtual sessions where all attendees agree not to record audio or video or take photos of attendees during any part of the session. (*Please see the **Consent to Photography/Video Recording Authorization to Use/Disclose Photograph(s) Form.***)

## Filing a Complaint or Grievance

Clients and caregivers may file a complaint at any time without fear of retaliation. When we receive a complaint, ESNorCal staff work to resolve the issue and prevent it from happening again.

# Steps to Follow if You Have a Complaint Or Grievance

## STEP 1

**Ask to meet with a member of your loved one's supervising team to discuss your concerns.** Usually this is the only step you need to take. We are committed to resolving issues quickly. If you are not satisfied after meeting with a supervisor or manager, please move on to the second step below.

## STEP 2

If the discussion with a supervisor or manager does not resolve the issue, **talk to your Program Manager or a member of ESNorCal's clinical leadership team** by emailing [Behavioralhealth@esnorcal.org](mailto:Behavioralhealth@esnorcal.org).

## STEP 3

If the issue is not resolved by the clinical leadership team, you may file a grievance by **contacting your health plan or by emailing [Quality@catalight.org](mailto:Quality@catalight.org)**. You may also bypass steps 1 and 2 above and file a grievance at any time.

# Common Terms Used During Treatment Sessions

The following are definitions of commonly used terms found in this handbook.

**Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA):** ABA is a scientific discipline. It focuses on the principles of how learning takes place. A wide variety of ABA techniques help clients with ASD learn new skills.

**Availability:** When your loved one can have services outside of any activities they have to participate in by law, such as school.

**Behavior Mapping:** A visual representation of engaging in appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and the consequences the behaviors result in.

**Caregiver:** A client's parent, guardian or legal representative.

**Caregiver-Mediated:** When a caregiver utilizes clinical strategies to implement goals with the client.

**Client:** An individual receiving treatment services from Easterseals Northern California (ESNorCal).

**Client-Mediated:** When a client utilizes clinical techniques or strategies to implement and monitor their own goals.

**Evidence-Based Therapies:** Treatments that are a) based on well-designed research and b) have shown to be effective.

**Family Coaching:** When a practitioner facilitates the practice of clinical strategies and techniques to address goals with the caregiver.

**Full Schedule:** The number of hours authorized by the funding source.

**Funding Source:** The organization responsible for some or all payment for services provided by ESNorCal.

**Guardian:** The person(s) authorized to make medical decisions for or on behalf of a client. This could be a parent but could also be another person (a grandparent or caregiver) who is responsible for the client's medical decisions.

**Practitioner:** Any professional providing services to ESNorCal clients.

**Responsible Adult:** Either a guardian or other individual 18 years of age or older who is capable and approved by the client's parent or caregiver to provide care to the client in their absence.

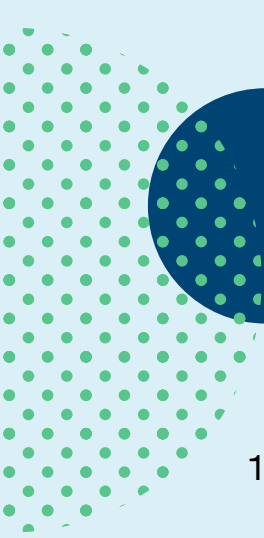
**Self-Determination:** The practice of a client choosing their own treatment goals and strategies.

**Services:** Any clinical service provided to clients by ESNorCal.

**Sessions:** The scheduled time during which a client receives services from ESNorCal.

**Supervising Team:** The program supervisor (PS) and the clinical manager (CM). The CM is responsible for developing a client's treatment plan. Together, the PS and CM ensure the client's treatment plan is followed, and the client is making progress.





If you have questions about  
Behavioral Health services, please email  
**[BehavioralHealth@esnorcal.org](mailto:BehavioralHealth@esnorcal.org)**.

**BURLINGAME**

1633 Bayshore Highway, Suite 155  
Burlingame, CA 94010  
(650) 443-2201

**DUBLIN**

5601 Arnold Road, Suite 102B  
Dublin, CA 94568  
(925) 266-8023

**FAIRFIELD**

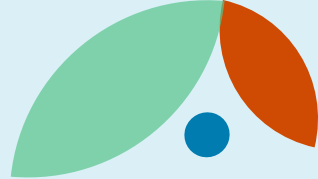
744 Empire Street, Suite 160  
Fairfield, CA 94533  
(707) 416-0460

**SAN JOSE**

800 N 1st St., Floor 2  
San Jose, CA 95112  
(925) 266-8400

**WALNUT CREEK**

2730 Shadelands Drive, Building 10  
Walnut Creek, CA 94598  
(925) 266-8400



## **Corporate Office**

2730 Shadelands Drive  
Building 10  
Walnut Creek, CA 94598  
(925) 266-8400

## **Hours**

M-F 8:30am – 5:30pm  
(Clinical hours may vary  
by office and service)

[esnorcal.org](https://www.esnorcal.org)



Easterseals Northern California has been awarded the highest level of accreditation by CARF International for all its services.