

## ACT's Autism Manual for B.C.

Living and Working with Children and Adults with ASD

### Chapter 5: CONTRACTING WITH PROFESSIONALS ON THE RASP

*Contributed by ACT - Autism Community Training information staff*



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## Chapter 5: Contracting with Professionals on the RASP

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The “Introduction to ACT’s Autism Manual for B.C.” provides valuable context to this chapter. Download at: [www.actcommunity.ca/autism-manual](http://www.actcommunity.ca/autism-manual).

# 5 CONTRACTING WITH PROFESSIONALS ON THE RASP

After you have received a diagnosis of ASD for your child, you will embark on a journey to find the best services and treatment plan for your child. While this may at first seem a daunting task, there are many advantages to making the key decisions on who will be working with your child. One of ACT's roles is to help families learn about this process and to support you in managing your child's program. Here our focus is on contracting with service providers, but ACT's staff and website can provide you with a wealth of related information on navigating the Registry for Autism Service Providers (RASP) and understanding qualifications.

ACT Information Officers are on hand to provide you with personalized support. Other key resources are ACT's website and ACT's *Autism Manual for B.C.* The following chapters are particularly relevant:

- Chapter 2, "Developing a Treatment Team for a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder"
- Chapter 4, "MCFD-Funded Services for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder"

## AUTISM FUNDING & THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARENT

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) provides you with guidelines regarding the autism funding you receive for your child. You have the overall authority to decide how funds are spent for your child whether you or the Autism Funding Branch holds the funds. MCFD's *A Parent's Handbook: Your Guide to Autism Funding* outlines which services are eligible for reimbursement. If you are not clear about whether an autism expense is eligible, contact them directly by calling 1-877-777-3530.

For families opting for direct payment, the Autism Funding Branch will require repayment for any ineligible services. You are responsible for choosing, interviewing, and hiring the appropriate service providers. Think of it as running a small business with the product being a good treatment program for your child.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF A CONTRACT

In the experience of ACT's staff, the best way to develop a successful working relationship with a RASP service provider is to have a written contract in which the responsibilities of both the family and the professionals working with your child are detailed.

## WHAT IS A CONTRACT?

A contract is a formal agreement between you and the professional that outlines the services and programs you will receive from the provider. By signing the contract, you are accepting all of the terms and conditions. Contracts are legally binding, so it is important to read them carefully and understand before you sign!

### **Basic components of a good contract when contracting with an agency or behavior consultant:**

- A clearly written description of the services being provided to your child
- Behavior Plan of Intervention (BPI)
  - Time required for assessment, observation and draft
  - Timelines for completing the BPI and how soon families can expect an intervention to begin after the assessment is complete
- Start and end date of services (referenced to your child's funding period)
- Billing cycle (date that the invoice will be submitted to Autism Funding Branch or AFB)
- Service providers involved (names and titles and their role in your child's intervention plan)
- Supervision information (Category A and B consultants, program managers, and behavior interventionists)
- Hourly rate for each service provider or monthly maximum costs negotiated between the family and service provider (easier to manage budget)
- A statement that your written consent is needed to increase negotiated monthly maximum hours. The Autism Funding Branch will not monitor monthly expenditures, but the parent can establish a monthly ceiling by informing the provider in writing.

- Billable items (identify and describe initial billable items and ongoing billable items including time required to complete each). These may include:
  - Training of BIs (costs and process for hiring and training BIs to work with your child)
  - Mileage/travel time
  - Email and telephone meetings/consultation
  - School visits
  - Training behavior interventionists/overlap training
  - Report writing/preparing the Behavior Plan of Intervention
  - Letters of justification
  - Exceeding booked appointment (e.g., doorway chatting)
  - Telephone calls to the AFB on behalf of the parents (not regarding invoices)
  - Reviewing documents from other professionals
  - Preparing program materials
  - Is there a minimum monthly cost – will this be broken out in the invoice so you know what is being charged for?
  - Team meetings (who attends, how often – are parents included, can they veto meetings?)
  - Prepping for meetings
- As the Autism Funding Branch does not pay for missed sessions, the contract should specify that in the event of a missed session, the provider will work on the child's program development.
- Confidentiality and release of information. The parent should be specific regarding whom the professional has permission to speak with about their child.
- Are invoices provided and signed by parents before sending to AFB? (see below)
- Ownership of program materials (are they provided to parent at the end of the agreement?)
- Ownership of print/video data for your child – will this be returned to you?
- Are services home- or center-based?
- Process for changes to treatment or services – are parents consulted in advance?
- Termination agreement (how much notice is required?)

If you don't find all of the above details specified in your contract, ask the behavior consultant to add this information so there is clarity before the service begins. Remember that all terms of a contract may be negotiated.

We recommend that you ask to see the provider's contract as well as a sample Behavior Plan of Intervention (BPI) in advance. When a contract is provided, take your time reading and reviewing a contract with a potential provider. Do not be pressured into signing before all of your questions have been answered. If English is not your first language, ask for someone to translate.

## PAYING YOUR SERVICE PROVIDER USING AUTISM FUNDING

Prior to entering into a contract with a service provider, you will need to complete a Request to Pay form with the Autism Funding Branch that authorizes payment for services received by the professional. We recommend:

- Adding a requirement that the service provider gets your signature on the monthly invoices before they are sent to the AFB. This will mean that you need to be very responsive to requests for your sign-off, as good service providers need to be paid in a timely fashion or you may lose their services!
- Never signing blank invoices or "Request to Pay" forms.

Keep in mind that the AFB requires that the work is done before payment is made. ACT advises against parents allowing service providers to bill the child's account in advance. MCFD has a helpful presentation to guide you through the funding/payment process. This is available for viewing on the ACT website: [www.actcommunity.ca/information/treatment-funding-in-bc/](http://www.actcommunity.ca/information/treatment-funding-in-bc/).

## TIMESHEETS AND INVOICES

We recommend you keep a calendar of service provider visits with dates and the number of hours of service. Service providers should also maintain a log that lists the services provided. A sample timesheet is included at the end of this section. Once you have signed a contract and the service provider has carried out the work in a timely and professional manner, your child's account will be invoiced for services rendered directly, if you have pre-authorized this. If your child is age 12 or older and you have opted for direct payment, you will issue payment for the services. If you prefer to approve each invoice, it is important to review it promptly to ensure your service providers receive pay-

ment in good time. A sample invoice is included at the end of this section, and we've added a brief description of the services or billable items normally included on an invoice.

## FINDING THE RIGHT PROFESSIONAL

Finding the right professional to work with your child may be a series of firsts for your family—first exposure to the complex world of autism intervention plans, first time hiring service professionals and becoming an employer, and signing your first contract. Chapter 2, “Developing a Treatment Team for a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder,” is a valuable resource. It outlines what you can expect from a behavior consultant, their qualifications, and the difference between Category A (independent) and B (supervised) consultants. Services can vary significantly between providers. We recommend you shop around and check out the competition. Many behavior consultants complete profiles on the RASP. Look for them when you search the RASP—see [www.actcommunity.ca/rasp/](http://www.actcommunity.ca/rasp/).

These will provide you with valuable information on their background and practice. Read several profiles and ask questions about their qualifications, experience and their approach to autism treatment. Ask for references.

Dr. David Batstone, a registered psychologist and a member of ACT's Advisory Council has provided a helpful guide, “Talking to Professionals about their Qualifications.” See AID Resource [www.actcommunity.ca/resource/2670/](http://www.actcommunity.ca/resource/2670/).

## WHAT ABOUT CONTRACTING WITH PROFESSIONALS OTHER THAN BEHAVIOR CONSULTANTS?

We have outlined recommendations for contracting with behavior consultants mainly because this professional group does not have a College that oversees services and qualifications. However, it is recommended that you are equally diligent when finding and hiring speech language pathologists, occupational therapists and physical therapists.







## Terminology

Behavior Interventionist	Also called Program Manager, Program Supervisor or Senior Behavior Interventionist
Behavior Consultant	Also called Behavior Analyst
*It's important to ask your service provider for a job description for the above positions. When billing the Autism Funding Branch for services for children under age 6, providers must use the job titles of Behavior Consultant and Behavior Interventionist on invoice. Behavior Consultants must be on the RASP.	

## Billable Item Descriptions

Billable Items for Behavior Interventionists	Description
Training	Attendance in workshops or meeting/orientation set up by the BC
Intervention	Direct work with the child – may be at home or other settings like daycares, community programs, social skills groups, etc.
Program Development	Updating data sheets, preparing binder/programs, overlap with BC
Team Meeting	Meeting with parent, consultant and other team members

Billable Items for Senior Behavior Interventionist/Program Manager	Description
BI Training or Overlap	Time spent training or supervising BIs
Program Development	Updating data sheets, preparing binder/programs, overlap with BC
Team Meeting	Meeting with parent, consultant and other team members
Program Manager Training	Attendance in workshops or meeting/orientation set up by the BC

Billable Items for Behavior Consultants	Description
Preparation of Behavior Plan of Intervention	Assessment and development of BPI
BI Training or Overlap	Supervision of Behavior Interventionists
Team Meeting	Time spent with parents, BIs, and other team members
Report Writing	Preparation and completion of reports for initial assessment, transition reports, annual reports, or at parent's request (e.g., for school purposes)
Letters of Justification	Written at parent's request (e.g., therapeutic _____)
Program Development	Initial and ongoing development of programs and lessons
Program Review	Regular maintenance of programs – review of targets, acquisition rates, etc. Tied in with program development
Direct Consulting	Providing feedback to parents or BIs at request – can be done in person, by telephone or email
Assessment	Direct work with child to assess skill level for program development
Parent Training	Workshop or meeting with parents for training about the program or specific strategies
Video Review	Review of intervention or pre-recorded situation – this is discussed previously with the parent
Travel Time	Time spent to travel to client
School or Outside-Home Visit	Done at request of parent – BC meets with school team or observes child in the school or other outside-home environments such as daycares, community programs, etc.
Supervision of Category B Consultant	Only applicable for Category A (independent) Behavior Consultants who supervise Category B consultants – parents should incur this cost only if the meeting between the BCs is about the specific client's program
Purchase of Program Materials	Materials like ABLLS-R, Language Cards, Verb Cards, etc. – will be billed by the BC; it is important for the BC to specify how much each item costs