

## What is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)?

ABA is a set of principles that form the basis for many behavioral treatments. ABA is based on the science of learning and behavior. This science includes general “laws” about how behavior works and how learning takes place. ABA therapy applies these laws to behavior treatments in a way that helps to increase useful or desired behaviors. ABA also applies these laws to help reduce behaviors that may interfere with learning or behaviors that may be harmful. ABA therapy is used to increase language and communication skills. It is also used to improve attention, focus, social skills, memory, and academics.

ABA is considered an evidence-based “best” practice treatment by the US Surgeon General and by the American Psychological Association. “Evidence-based” means that ABA has passed scientific tests of its usefulness, quality, and effectiveness.

The principles and methods of behavior analysis have been applied effectively in many circumstances to develop a wide range of skills in learners with and without disabilities.

## ABA Methods Support Persons with Autism in a Variety of Ways

- 1. Teach skills to replace problem behaviors.** So, your child can learn what “to do,” not just what “to stop doing.”
- 2. Increase positive behavior and reduce interfering behavior.** For example, reinforcement procedures increase on-task behavior or social interactions and reduce behaviors like self-injury or stereotyping.
- 3. Maintain behaviors.** For example: Teaching self-control and self-monitoring procedures to maintain and generalize job-related social skills.
- 4. Change responses to your child’s behavior.** These responses could unintentionally be rewarding problem behavior.
- 5. Increase your child’s academic, social, and self-help skills.**
- 6. Improve ability to focus on tasks, comply with tasks, and increase motivation to perform.**
- 7. Aim to improve cognitive skills.** Helps your child be more available for learning.
- 8. Generalize or to transfer behavior from one situation or response to another.** For example, from completing assignments in the resource room to performing as well in the mainstream classroom.

## Components of a Strong ABA Program

- 1. Supervision.** The program should be designed and monitored by a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) or someone with similar credentials.
- 2. Training.** All participants should be fully trained, with supervisors providing support, monitoring, and ongoing training for the duration of the program.
- 3. Programming.** The program should be created after a detailed assessment has been conducted and tailored to the child’s specific deficits and skills.
- 4. Functional Programming.** Goals selected should be beneficial and functional to the individual and increase or enhance his/her quality of life.
- 5. Data Collection.** Data on skill acquisition and behavior reduction should be recorded and analyzed regularly. This data should be reviewed by the supervisor.
- 6. Family Training.** Family members should be trained in order to teach and reinforce skills. They should be involved in both the planning and the review process.
- 7. Team Meetings.** Should be conducted with therapists, supervisors, and family members to maintain consistency, identify pertinent issues, and discuss progress.

## Certifications in ABA

Therapists may be certified through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. If they are board certified and have at least a Master's degree, then they will have the letters BCBA after their name. BCBA-D means they have a doctoral degree. Other therapists may have BCABA credentials. This means education in ABA at a Bachelor's level.

How do I obtain ABA services:

- Check your local chapter of the Autism Society of the America. Go to their website [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org) to find state-by-state resources.
- Find Board Certified Behavior Analysts at [www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com)

## Insurance Coverage for ABA

Insurance companies vary in their willingness to pay for ABA therapies. Policies also differ from state to state. You will need to check your policy to determine if ABA services will be covered or reimbursed.

*Thanks to Brad Dickey, Jackson WY for content in this brochure.*

**For more information  
about ABA contact:**



Information & Referral for Parents  
of Children with Disabilities

**Parent  
Information  
Center**

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E-mail: [info@wpic.org](mailto:info@wpic.org)  
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## A Guide On Effective ABA Treatment

**Parent Information Center**

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