



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AUTISM & APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA)



What is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)?

Behavior analysis is a scientifically validated approach to understanding behavior and how it is affected by the environment. In this context, "behavior" refers to actions and skills. "Environment" includes any influence – physical or social – that might change or be changed by one's behavior.

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is widely recognized as a safe and effective treatment for autism. A number of state and federal agencies, including the U.S. Surgeon General, have endorsed it. Over the last decade, the nation has seen a particularly dramatic increase in the use of ABA to help persons with autism live happy and productive lives. In particular, ABA principles and techniques can foster basic skills such as looking, listening and imitating, as well as complex skills such as reading, conversing and understanding another person's perspective.

The goal of ABA is meaningful and positive changes in behavior that will result in enhanced quality of life.

What is Early Intervention?

Early intervention is intended for infants and toddlers who have a developmental delay or disability. Eligibility is determined by evaluating the child to see if s/he does, in fact, have a delay in development or a disability. Research demonstrates that early intervention is essential in addressing problematic behaviors and remediating core deficits related to autism, such as communication and socialization skills.

How can Autism Learning Partners (ALP) help?

Autism Learning Partners provides treatment for children of all ages based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). A Behavior Technician works directly with the child under the supervision of a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA).

Autism Learning Partners provides ABA therapy services in the home, clinic, school, and community settings.

We collaborate with other educational and therapy professionals working with the child to ensure continuity of care. We focus on moving the child from 1:1 services to integration with same-age peers to enhance their socialization skills.

What are the basic principles of ABA?

Behavior analysis focuses on the principles that explain how learning takes place. Positive reinforcement is one such principle. When a behavior is followed by some sort of reward, the behavior is more likely to be repeated. Through decades of research, the field of behavior analysis has developed many techniques for increasing useful behaviors and reducing those that may cause harm or interfere with learning.

Who can benefit from ABA?

Research has demonstrated that individuals with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities benefit from ABA, and ABA can be used across settings. ABA techniques can be especially useful in teaching behaviors to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who may otherwise not “pick up” these behaviors on their own as quickly as other children. A wide variety of ABA techniques have been developed for building useful skills in learners of all ages. These techniques can be used in both structured situations, such as formal instruction in classrooms, and in more natural everyday situations, such as play time or meal time.

What is Autism?

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by:

- Social impairments
- Cognitive impairments
- Communication difficulties
- Repetitive behaviors

Because autism is a spectrum disorder, it can range from very mild to very severe. It occurs in all ethnic, socioeconomic and age groups. Males are four times more likely to have autism than females. Some children with autism appear normal before age 1 or 2 and then suddenly “regress” and lose language or social skills they had previously gained. This is called the regressive type of autism.

Early Signs

A person with ASD might demonstrate some or all of the following:

- Not respond to their name (the child may appear deaf)
- Not point at objects or things of interest or demonstrate interest
- Not play “pretend” games
- Avoid eye contact
- Want to be alone
- Have difficulty understanding, or showing understanding, of other people’s feelings or their own
- Have no speech or delayed speech
- Repeat words or phrases over and over (echolalia)
- Give unrelated answers to questions
- Get upset by minor changes
- Have obsessive interests

- Flap their hands, rock their body, or spin in circles
- Have unusual reactions (over- or under-sensitivity) to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel
- Have low to no social skills
- Avoid or resist physical contact
- Demonstrate little safety or danger awareness
- Reverse pronouns (e.g., says “you” instead of “I”)

Individuals with Autism May Also:

- Have unusual interests and behaviors
- Have extreme anxiety and phobias, as well as unusual phobias
- Line up toys or other objects
- Play with toys the same way every time
- Like parts of objects (e.g., wheels)
- Exhibit hyperactivity (very active)
- Exhibit impulsivity (acting without thinking)
- Have a short attention span
- Engage in aggression
- Cause self-injury
- Have meltdowns
- Have unusual eating and sleeping habits
- Have unusual mood or emotional reactions
- Have lack of fear or more fear than expected

M-CHAT General Information

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all children receive autism-specific screening at 18 and 24 months of age in addition to broad developmental screening at 9, 18, and 24 months. The M-CHAT-R/F, one of the AAP recommended tools, can be administered at these well-child visits.

Regardless of age, if you see any of the above symptoms, please contact your pediatrician.

Families Who Need Services

For information on how to receive services or if you need help finding a doctor to get a diagnosis, contact us for support and information. We walk families through the entire process of getting ABA coverage through their insurance.

Physicians or Other Medical Professionals

If you would like to learn more about ASD, ABA, and/or the services we offer, please visit our website or call us today!

We Accept Most Major Insurance Plans, Including Medicaid!