

Facts About ABA for Families



Q My physician is recommending a therapy called Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). What does ABA look like for people with autism?

A ABA is often prescribed for people with autism and can be provided in schools, homes, clinics, and community settings. ABA is based on the science of behavior. It is individualized based on the autistic person's strengths and the challenges they experience.

ABA providers are called Behavior Analysts. Like other medical and behavioral health providers, Behavior Analysts rely upon strategies and procedures from peer-reviewed research. They continually evaluate and customize treatment options based on the needs of the autistic person. Behavior Analysts request and integrate information from the autistic person and their caregivers and coordinate care with other professionals who serve the autistic person.

The oldest and largest national certification board in ABA is the Behavior Analyst Certification Board® (BACB®). BACB certification can help health plans, and subscribers identify qualified ABA providers.

Q Does ABA acknowledge the differences that make a person with autism unique?

A Yes. ABA providers work with the person with autism and their circle of support to learn what is important to them over different points in time.

For example,

- for a toddler, this may be learning to speak or point;
- for a tween, this could be learning how to safely walk in a parking lot or take turns playing video games with peers;
- for a teenager, this could be learning how to navigate social media or practicing healthful hygiene.

ABA providers celebrate each autistic person's unique identity and personality and incorporate personal preferences throughout treatment.

Q Is the goal of ABA to make a person normal?

A No. Safety, dignity, and personal preference are essential components of any ABA program. ABA providers work directly with people with autism to choose meaningful goals. For example, ABA therapists implement programs that can help create awareness of existing societal expectations so that they can make informed choices.

Q Do ABA providers allow clients to make choices?

A Yes. Choice is an essential part of an ABA program. Providers incorporate choice throughout the treatment process. This begins at intake when autistic people and caregivers work with providers to set goals that are important to them. The incorporation of choice is continually evaluated throughout treatment.

Q How does ABA align with neurodiversity?

A ABA providers teach evidence-based communication skills to people with autism, so they can express their wants and needs, strengthening their ability to advocate and participate in ongoing treatment decisions and person-centered planning. ABA therapy focuses on empowering people with autism to navigate their world and live connected and healthy lives.

Q Does the ABA profession accept the exploitation of people with autism?

A No. All recipients of ABA services have a right to receive effective treatment that is free from exploitation. ABA providers who exploit or attempt to use their power to take advantage of autistic people should be reported to the appropriate legal or regulatory authorities.

Q Has ABA changed over time?

A Yes. All science-based health care professions are constantly evolving. The last few decades have seen the practice of ABA advance with the establishment of more quality controls in the field. For example, conversion therapy would violate several of the current ethical codes in the profession of applied behavior analysis.

Q Do behavior analysts consider the reasons why a behavior might be happening?

A Yes. ABA providers very deliberately consider why clients behave the way they do. An entire methodology known as functional behavior assessment is designed around this basic idea. These reasons are expected to be incorporated into treatment to ensure needs, wants, and preferences are being met.



Although historically, person-first language has been preferred by the broader disability community, people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, their families, and providers have expressed dramatically different preferences. Because of this, we use both person-first and identity-first language in this Q&A.

For reference information, please contact info@casproviders.org.

CASP

The Council of Autism
Service Providers

<https://casproviders.org>

About CASP

CASP is an independent, non-profit association dedicated to advancing evidence-based care and best practices in services to individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

