

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

How is ABA useful? How can I get ABA services for my child?

What is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a method used to reduce challenging behaviors. ABA is also used to help people acquire and improve many skills including language, attention, social awareness, self-help, and play. ABA can measure how each behavior changes. It breaks down complex behaviors and skills into simple parts. ABA has been found to be very effective for children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other similar developmental disabilities.

How does it work?

ABA uses basic principles of learning to change behavior. ABA looks at the ABCs of behavior: The **A**ntecedent (what happens before the behavior), the **B**ehavior itself, and the **C**onsequence of the behavior (what happens after the behavior). They change the consequences of the behavior in order to change the behavior itself. They look at the antecedents to figure out what might be triggering the behavior. ABA is very *data driven*. They track whether progress is being made, and if no progress is made the methods used are changed to find something that works for the child.

Terms to Know

Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA):

A professional certified by a board to provide ABA therapy. A BCaBA has a Bachelor's degree, a BCBA has a Master's degree, and a BCBA-D has a Doctorate degree.

Center of Excellence (COE):

A healthcare facility approved by Medicaid to diagnose or treat Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

Discrete Trial Learning/Training:

Discrete Trial Learning is a method of teaching behaviors in simple steps. Instead of trying to teach an entire skill or behavior, the skill is broken down into small pieces. Your child then receives a small reward (praise, a high-five, a token) for each small success.

Reinforcement

A reward or other type of consequence (such as praise, a high-five, a token) given to increase a particular behavior.

Where is ABA therapy done and how long does it take?

- Can be done in your home, in a community setting, in a school, or in a clinic
- Includes parent training
- 5-25 hours/week



How does my child get ABA services?

1. If a medical or mental health provider has recommended ABA, ask them for an order for ABA therapy. Be prepared that you may need an evaluation from a specialist to get this. Ask for a copy of the order for your records.
2. At the same time you are getting the order for ABA therapy, ask your insurance company for a list of approved ABA providers and get on their wait lists. *The wait list can be very long.*
3. Send the ABA order to your insurance company for pre-authorization.
4. If your insurance approves ABA services, then call a provider to set up an appointment. *Be prepared to wait a long time.*
5. If your insurance company denies ABA therapy, ask for a letter of medical necessity from your doctor so you can appeal the decision, then contact WAAA (see below) for advocacy and information on how to proceed with the appeal process.
6. DDA may be able to cover therapy if your insurance denies payment.

Many families have secured ABA therapy through the appeals process.
Don't give up if you are denied services!

For information on how to access ABA services in Washington:

[Washington Autism Alliance and Advocacy \(WAAA\)](#)
[Health Care Authority \(HCA\)](#)
[Whatcom Taking Action ABA Insurance Handout](#)

To find an advocate who can walk you through the process and insurance appeals: <http://www.washingtonautismadvocacy.org/updates/advocacy-resource-coordinators/>

From: <http://theautismblog.seattlechildrens.org/autism-and-aba-services-in-washington-state-an-update/>

Where can I find an ABA provider?

1. Complete list of Medicaid-covered ABA services in Washington: http://www.hca.wa.gov/medicaid/abatherapy/Documents/Medicaid_enrolled_ABA_Providers.pdf
2. Complete list of Board-certified ABA providers from Behavior Analyst Certification Board: www.bacb.com → Consumer Information → Find a Certificant → Zip Code