



New to ABA? Start Here

A practical introduction for families beginning Applied Behavior Analysis services.

Every child understood. Every family heard.
ABA should begin with understanding your child, your family, and the skills that can make everyday life more successful.

What is ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a science of learning and behavior. In practice, ABA uses observation, data, teaching strategies, reinforcement, and individualized supports to help build useful skills and reduce behaviors that interfere with safety, learning, communication, independence, or participation in daily life.

What does a BCBA do?

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) assesses needs, develops and updates the treatment plan, analyzes data, supervises treatment implementation, trains and supports the therapy team, collaborates with caregivers, and makes clinical decisions about programming.

What might my child work on?

Goals depend on the individual child. Areas may include functional communication, requesting help or breaks, following directions, transitions, play and social skills, safety, tolerating delays or denied access, daily living skills, emotional or behavioral regulation, and greater independence.

What happens during sessions?

ABA can include structured teaching and learning through everyday routines, play, conversation, community activities, self-care, and naturally occurring opportunities. The team collects data so the BCBA can determine what is improving and what needs to change.

How are challenging behaviors addressed?

The clinical team looks at what happens before and after behavior and why the behavior may be occurring. Treatment focuses on prevention, teaching safer and more effective replacement skills, reinforcing those skills, and using individualized behavior-support strategies when needed.

How are caregivers involved?

Caregiver participation is an important part of treatment. Your BCBA may work with you on communication strategies, transitions, routines, reinforcement, safety, behavior support, and ways to help skills carry over outside of direct sessions.

Where can ABA happen?

Depending on clinical need, payer requirements, and the service model available to your family, ABA may occur in settings such as the home, school, or community. The goal is for skills to become useful in the places where your child actually needs them.

How are goals chosen?

Goals should be meaningful, measurable, developmentally appropriate, and connected to the child's needs and family priorities. Assessment findings, caregiver input, direct observation, data, safety, independence, and payer requirements may all inform the treatment plan.

How does progress get measured?

The team collects data on treatment goals and behavior. The BCBA reviews those data regularly, evaluates whether teaching strategies are working, modifies programs when needed, and updates recommendations as your child progresses.

What about insurance or Medicaid?

Coverage and authorization requirements vary by plan. Families may be asked for diagnostic documentation, insurance information, evaluations, treatment plans, and periodic reassessments. Sunshine Therapies will tell you what is needed for your specific intake and authorization process.



Your First Weeks of ABA

What families can expect once treatment begins.

A GOOD START OFTEN INCLUDES

- ☐ Building rapport and learning what your child enjoys.
- ☐ Establishing predictable routines and expectations.
- ☐ Teaching communication and replacement skills early.
- ☐ Collecting baseline and ongoing data.
- ☐ Coaching caregivers on strategies that can be used outside sessions.
- ☐ Reviewing progress and making program changes based on data.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR BCBA

- ☐ What are the most important goals we are working on right now?
- ☐ How will we know whether a goal is improving?
- ☐ What should I practice between caregiver sessions?
- ☐ What should I do when a challenging behavior occurs?
- ☐ How are skills being generalized across people and settings?
- ☐ When will the treatment plan be reviewed or updated?

Ready to get started?

Complete the Sunshine Therapies intake form and gather the documents on our New Client Documents Checklist.

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