



Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)



WHAT is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is an evidence-based intervention that focuses on understanding behavior and how it is influenced by the environment. ABA therapy is a best practice treatment. ABA has been used to help children with autism and other related developmental disorders since the 1960s. ABA can be effective for people of all ages.

ABA helps us to understand:

- How behavior works
- How behavior is affected by the environment
- How learning takes place

ABA helps people develop daily living skills. It also helps improve quality of life. The goal is to increase helpful behaviors and decrease behaviors that are harmful or affect learning.

Benefits of ABA therapy programs:

- Increase language and communication skills
- Improve attention, focus, social skills, memory, and learning
- Decrease problem behaviors





HOW does ABA therapy work?

ABA involves many techniques for understanding and changing behavior.

ABA is a flexible treatment that should fit members:

- Hours and goals based on their needs
- Service location needs at home, school, and in the community
- Learning needs through one-to-one teaching or group instruction

A Board-Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) creates and manages the ABA services for the individual. The BCBA makes an assessment of the individual's abilities and needs. They use this assessment to write specific goals in the treatment plan. Family goals and preferences are included too. Technicians work with the individual and caregiver/guardian to practice their treatment plan skills. The team collects data to



WHO is eligible for ABA services?

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (or AHCCCS) is the Arizona state Medicaid plan that covers ABA services. Members may have AHCCCS as their primary or secondary health plan. ABA services are available for any member, regardless of age or diagnosis as long as they meet medical necessity. Services are available statewide, offering clinic, home and community-based services. Some ABA services require a prior authorization, which the provider will work with Mercy Care on.

Pay attention to these red flags and/or signs of low quality or harmful ABA provider practices.

1. Waitlists, or long delays in services starting after assessment
2. Requiring a diagnosis of ASD
3. Frequent changes in treatment team (high turnover)
4. Indefinite therapy – years of treatment within unclear timelines
5. High number of hours – requiring 40-hour commitment
6. Not seeing improvement with your loved one
7. BCBA not understanding treatment goals or not seeking feedback from the family
8. Punishment of any kind
9. Rigid approach or refusing to make basic accommodations
10. You and your loved one is not regularly seeing or talking with the BCBA
11. Moving too fast with treatment, not breaking down tasks into manageable pieces
12. Learned skills don't transfer to other settings
13. Minimal or no parent/caregiver training
14. Lack of an individualized treatment
15. Requiring the individual to leave school or end/cancel other services (medical or behavioral)

Here are what we call green flags, or signs of high-quality ABA providers.

1. Treatment goals are clear and easy to understand. Progress is seen in your loved one's life.
2. Encouraging, not forcing, behavior
3. Working in partnership with the parent/caregiver and other professionals
4. Focusing on skill development for improved quality of life
5. Open communication
6. Goals are being met—the “why” behind the behavior is identified
7. Reducing hours and services over time
8. Feeling heard and understood by the team
9. Can change, add or remove treatment goals based on the family need.



WHERE do I find ABA services?

There is no wrong door! You can speak with the pediatrician, primary care physician (PCP) or another medical provider about ABA. If enrolled in a Behavioral Health Home, you can talk with your case manager, DDD support coordinator, or school to find out if ABA is right for your child/loved one.

Mercy Care is here to help. You can visit our website at mercykar.es/aba to learn more and find an ABA provider.



WHEN contacting ABA therapy agencies, here are a few questions to ask.

1. Are you clinic-based or provide in-home therapy? Both?
2. How many Arizona licensed BCBA's do you have? (In Arizona, all BCBA's should be licensed)
3. How many clients does the BCBA have? (Ideally between 5-15 clients per BCBA)
4. How often does the BCBA meet with me/my child? (Ideally every couple weeks, monthly)
5. What happens during a typical ABA session?
6. If clinic-based, do you require my child to be full time? Can my child attend school while receiving ABA?
7. What parental involvement is expected?
8. How do you decide goals for my child? Do you consider input from parents?
9. Once the assessment is complete, how quickly would services begin?



Remember, you have options. If ABA doesn't feel right for your family or loved one, let's work together to find the right service.

Mercy Care is here to help!

Call Mercy Care Member Services at **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879 (TTY 711)** or visit our website at mercykar.es/aba. Mercy Care DCS CHP members can visit mercykar.es/aba-dcs.

If you need a qualified interpreter, written information in other formats, translation or other services, call the number on your ID card or **1-800-385-4104** (TTY **711**).

Si necesita un intérprete calificado, información escrita en otros formatos, servicios de traducción u otros servicios, comuníquese con el número que aparece en su tarjeta de identificación o **1-800-385-4104** (TTY **711**).

Mercy Care
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Mercy Care Member Services

Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

602-263-3000 or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**)

24-hour nurse line: **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879**

References

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>

<https://beaminghealth.com/article/aba-therapy-14-red-and-green-flags-to-consider>

<https://www.empoweredneurofamilies.com/blog/autism-therapy-red-flags>



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