



# **What Every Parent Needs to Know about Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)**

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# Know Your Rights

- Six Major Principles of The Individuals with Disabilities Education ACT (IDEA)
  - IDEA is the law that schools must follow for educating students with disabilities



# Zero Reject

- Schools must educating **ALL** children with disabilities
  - This principle applies regardless of the nature or severity of the disability
  - Schools cannot refuse to educate a student with disabilities simply because they don't offer the services
  - Services begin AT AGE 3 in states that provides services to children without disabilities (including TN)

# Nondiscriminatory Identification and Evaluation

- Schools must use non-biased, multifaceted methods of evaluation to determine whether a child has a disability
- Identification and placement cannot be based on a SINGLE test score



## Free and Appropriate Education-(FAPE)

- All children with disabilities, regardless of type or severity shall receive FAPE without cost to the parents
- All children with disabilities must receive an individualized education program (IEP)
  - The IEP specifies the child's unique educational needs and states the goals and objectives of teaching for at least one school year



# Least Restrictive Environment

- All students should be educated to the greatest extent possible with children without disabilities
- Students with disabilities should have continuum of placement options



# Parent and Student Participation and Shared Decision Making

- Schools must collaborate with parents and children with disabilities in the development of the child's IEP



# Due Process Safeguards

- If the parent and school cannot agree on a plan for the student's education the parent is entitled to a hearing by an impartial third party
- School districts must pay attorney's fees if the hearing officer rules in favor of the parents





# ABA Definition

- “ABA is the science in which procedures derived from the principles of behavior are systematically applied to improve socially significant behavior to a meaningful degree and to demonstrate experimentally that the procedures employed were responsible for the improvement in behavior” (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968).



# What is ABA?

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
  - A science
    - An organized body of knowledge discovered through the process of objective observation, measurement, and evaluation
    - *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, Journal of Behavioral Education, Journal of Precision Teaching, Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*
  - A practice
    - A method of applying the principles of behavior to understand and improve important human behavior
    - The practice of ABA has been an ongoing effort for over 40 years



# Behaviorism

- The philosophy of the science of behavior analysis
  - A behaviorist believes that the interaction between the environment and behavior is the most important subject matter when studying behavior
    - A behaviorist does not invent hypothetical constructs as causal mechanisms for behavior



# Mentalism

- Is the philosophy behind many branches of the science of psychology
  - Assumes mental or inner states exist that are different from observable behavior
  - These mental states are causes of or mediators of behavior
  - Mental states are used to explain behavior
    - These are called explanatory fictions
      - » “ She hand-flaps because she is autistic. ”



# Behaviorism and Mentalism

- In behaviorism the subject matter is behavior
  - Behaviorism uses observable interactions with the environment to explain behavior
    - Some examples
      - > Positive reinforcement
      - > Negative reinforcement
      - > Type I punishment
- In mentalistic sciences the subject matter is often behavior but not always
  - Mentalism uses hypothetical constructs to explain behavior
    - Some example of hypothetical constructs
      - > Cognitive maps
      - > Schema
      - > Intelligence
      - > Neural networks
      - > Learning styles
      - > Disability label



# Behaviorism and Mentalism

- Behavioral explanation
  - The child found the candy bar under the desk easily because a candy bar was there yesterday and she saw it.
- Mentalistic explanation
  - The child used her cognitive map and schema of the situation to find the candy bar under the desk.
- Cognitive maps and schema cannot be measured nor manipulated, rather they are inferred from the observation of observable behavior
  - There is no way to determine that a cognitive map or schema exists
  - Even if they do exist there is no way to affect them



# Behaviorism

- Over 50 years of research has verified that the principles of behavior are universal and have many applications to every day problems.
- Behaviorists try to avoid circular reasoning.
  - If a child has a normal IQ and his achievement is low he has a *learning disability*. How do we “know”? He has normal IQ and low achievement
    - The problem is placed somewhere within the child
      - > The problem is inaccessible and cannot be changed
- Behaviorism and ABA are very optimistic. (It’s not that the student can’t learn, but it is that we haven’t found the right learning conditions)



# Behavior Analysis

- Three Branches
  - Conceptual Analysis of Behavior
    - Focus on theoretical or conceptual issues
  - Experimental Analysis of Behavior
    - Focus on discovering basic principles of behavior
    - Research done in a laboratory environment with both humans and non-humans
  - Applied Behavior Analysis
    - Focus on discovering and clarifying functional relations between socially significant behavior and its controlling variables
    - Research done in “real world” environments with humans





# Behavioral Technology

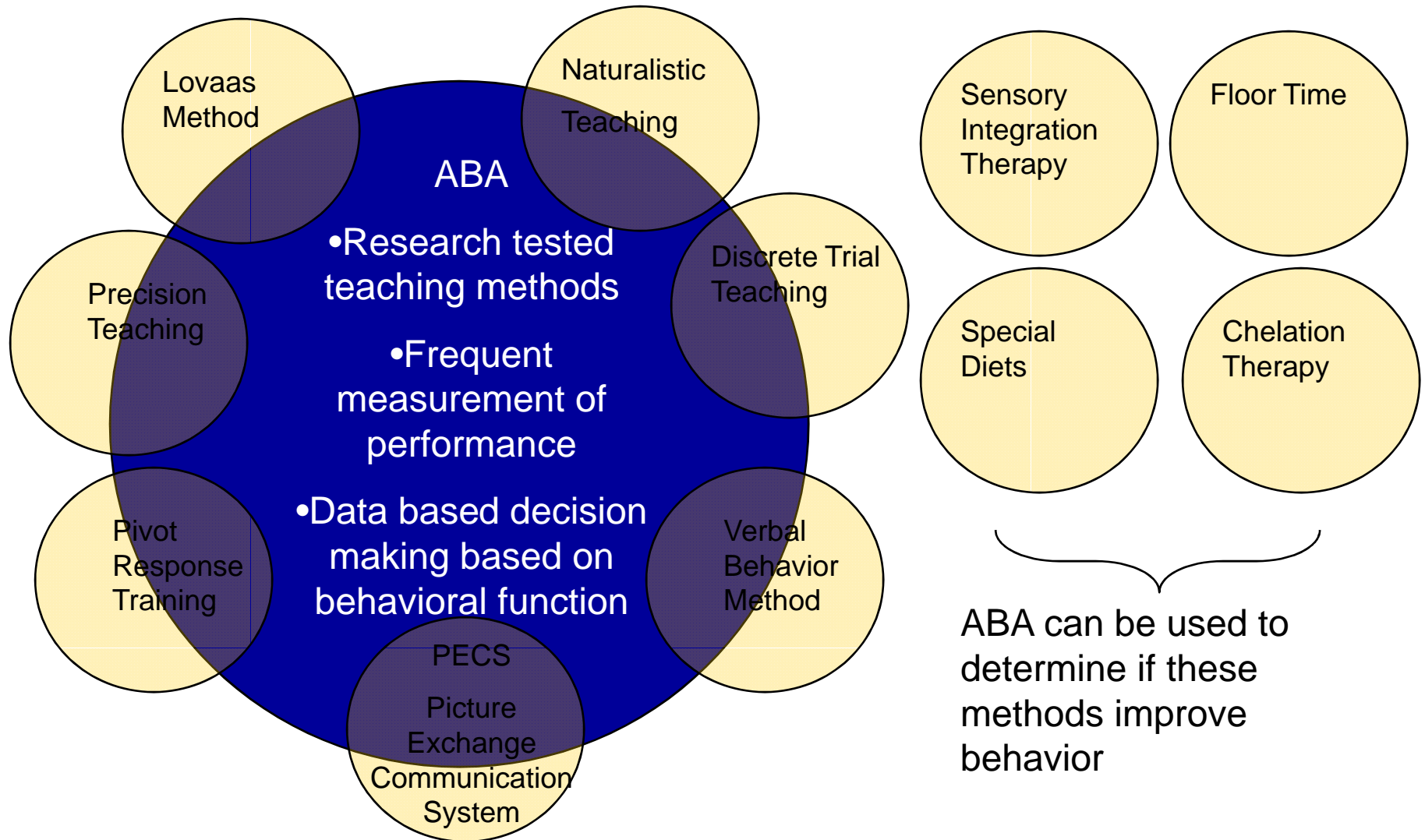
- Services derived from the principles of behavior that have been tested and shown to be effective on socially significant behavior
  - Mental health services
  - Educational services
  - Professional development in business
  - Consumer and occupational safety



# Behavioral Technology

- The focus of behavioral technology
  - Applying research tested methods to improve the lives of the people served
- Quality Indicators
  - Behavior(s) prioritized and targeted for improvement by their importance to the individual
  - Procedures derived from published research
  - Procedures delivered consistently across practitioners
  - Direct and frequent measurement of the behavior(s) of interest
  - Data based decision making
  - Procedures produce meaningful change in behavior

# Practice of ABA





# History of ABA

- Applied behavior analysis (ABA) began in the 1950s when researchers applied the principles of behavior to improve socially significant behaviors.
  - The Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis (JABA) was first published in 1968. In the first issue Baer, Wolf, & Risley published a landmark paper defining ABA.



# ABA is Not

- Coercive
  - It is unethical and scientifically unwise to force children to do things they don't want to
- Just used to eliminate bad behavior
  - For any behavior targeted for reduction there must also be a functional replacement taught
- Bribery
  - Bribery is an *illicit payment for an illegal action*
- Only for children with Autism
  - The procedures derived from the study of behavior have universal application



# ABA is Not

- Going to teach children to become robots
  - Studies have shown that ABA is effective for teaching spontaneous and creative behavior
- Just discrete trial training
  - ABA is more than just an instructional method
- Easy
  - ABA promises no easy fixes or cures, just hard work and attention to detail with a focus on small but important changes on a daily basis
- A new fad in education
  - Almost 50 years of research showing improvements in important behaviors



# What Does a Behavior Analyst Do?

- Uses the tools of science to determine how the environment affects behavior
- Provides individualized behavioral assessments and interventions for children, adolescents, and adults
  - Interventions based on analysis of the environment



# Terms and What they Mean

- Discrete Trial
  - A teaching episode that includes an instructional cue/question, a student response, and a consequence
- Lovaas Method
  - Discrete trial teaching based on Dr. Ivor Lovaas's research
- PECS
  - Picture exchange communication systems
    - A form of communication where icons or pictures are exchanged for activities (bathroom) or tangibles (cookies)





# Terms and What they Mean

- Verbal Behavior Method
  - A particular method of practice in which students are first taught to request things
- Reinforcement
  - A consequence that increases the future occurrence of a behavior
- Mand
  - A request
- Tact
  - A label
- Intraverbal
  - conversation



# Important steps in developing a home program



# The Consultant/Supervisor

- A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)
  - At least a Master's degree in Behavior Analysis or a related area
  - 225 hours of graduate level coursework in specific behavior analytic content areas
  - 1500 hours of supervised experience in designing and implementing applied behavior analysis interventions
  - A passing score or standardized exam



# The Consultant/Supervisor

- Should have a least one year experience in providing ABA services directly to children and/or adults with ASD.
- Should also have experience with both general and special education.



# The Consultant/Supervisor

- Attending or giving some workshops, taking some courses, or getting brief hands-on experience does NOT qualify an individual to practice Applied Behavior Analysis effectively and ethically.
- Unfortunately, there may be some individuals who misrepresent themselves in this manner.



## A Consultant will:

- Set up the curriculum for your child's program
- Visit different settings to observe your child
- Identify areas of need (i.e., self-help skills, socialization skills, etc.)
- Hold and manage meetings to discuss your child's specific needs with all of the team
- Train therapists on techniques for dealing the problem behaviors



# Therapists/Home trainers

- Will be trained by consultant supervisors
- Can be college students (special education, child development, psychology, ABA, etc.), teachers assistants, substitute teachers, etc.
- Should have experience in fields related to children with special needs
- Should understand the program principles and have experience providing ABA services



# When hiring therapists:

- Ask questions!
- Be clear about expectations
  - Discipline
  - Documentation
  - Hours
- Get references





# Documentation

- Documentation of your in-home program is crucial!
- Documentation should be:
  - Graphs
  - For each task or drill
  - Recorded in the same manor by each therapist
  - Reviewed regularly by the BCBA for accuracy, task completion, and for moving the program forward



# Regular team meetings

- Should occur at least once a month and preferably more often than that
- Help to adjust, add, or delete activities in the program
- Help to troubleshoot any problems of the team
- Should review behaviors, learning issues, drills, social skills and play skills, and any child, parent, or therapist issues



# Your home program should:

- Have the following components:
  - A list of target skills to teach
  - Techniques on how to teach each target skill
  - Materials needed to teach
  - Probe sheets for data collection
  - Graphs for data analysis
- Extinguish and minimize problem behaviors and increase appropriate behaviors



# Your home program should:

- Get your child ready to learn
  - By teaching basic academic concepts and building on these as the child progresses
- Supplement the school programs to meet your child's goals
- Incorporate prompting, error correction, reinforcement, stimulus control, preference assessments, and choice procedures in skill-building drills.



# Your home program should:

- Incorporate events like going to the park, going to a birthday party, or playing in the backyard into learning experiences for your child.
- Be constantly changing and growing with your child.



# Your Questions