

# Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

What it is | What it isn't | Would my child benefit

Parent Connections Educational Series





# Session Description

- In this session, we will define what Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is and what it is not. We will also discuss who would benefit from ABA services, as well as strategies and resources for being an informed consumer.



# Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

- What it is:
  - Scientific, data-driven field that focuses on improvement of socially significant behaviors through the principles of behavior
  - Social significance is determined by the positive outcome a treatment is likely to have on the target individual's quality of life
  - Applied in a variety of contexts...



# Education

Employment

Safety

Therapeutic

Health

Rehabilitation

Economics

Organizational Management

Clinical Therapy

Addiction

Motorist Safety

Autism

Traumatic Brain Injury

Mental Health

Students of All Ages  
(early learners to college students)

Professional Athletes

# Geriatric



# Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

- What it is not:
  - Autism specific intervention
  - Child only intervention
  - Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT)
  - Punishment focused intervention
  - Out-dated
  - Lacking of evidence





# Helpful Resources

- National Autism network: Top 10 Myths about ABA
  - <http://nationalautismnetwork.com/about-autism/autism-treatments/top-10-myths-about-applied-behavior-analysis.html>
- Common Misconceptions
  - <http://www.behaviorbabe.com/commonmisconceptions.htm>
- BACB Guidelines
  - Ethical Compliance Code: <http://bacb.com/ethics/>
  - ASD Practice Guidelines: <http://bacb.com/asd-practice-document/>



# Who Provides ABA Services

- BACB: <http://bacb.com/become-credentialed/>
- Tiered System of Certification
  - Doctorate Level – Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA-D)
  - Master’s Level – Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)
  - Bachelor’s Level – Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA)
  - Technician – Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)



# Training Requirements

## BCBA-D

- Certified as a BCBA
- Doctoral degree from an ABAI accredited school

## BCBA

- Acceptable Master's degree
- Supervised fieldwork (1,500)
- Pass BCBA exam

## BCaBA

- Bachelor's degree
- Coursework covering current Task List
- Supervised fieldwork (1,000)
- Pass examination

## RBT

- 18 years of age
- High school diploma or equivalent
- Complete 40 hours training
- Criminal background check
- Pass competency exam
- Pass RBT exam





# Who Does What?

## BCBA-D

- **Functions as BCBA**
- Completes functional and skill based assessments
- Design and implement programming
- Supervise the work of BCBA, BCaBA, RBT or anyone else delivering behavior analytic services
- Supervise fieldwork of those seeking certification

## BCBA

- Completes functional and skill based assessments
- Design and implement programming
- Supervise the work of BCaBA, RBT or anyone else delivering behavior analytic services
- Supervise fieldwork of those seeking certification

## BCaBA

- May **NOT** practice independently
- Must be supervised by a BCBA or BCBA-D at least monthly
- All activities performed under supervision:
  - Design and implement programming
  - Supervise the work of RBT or others providing behavior analytic services

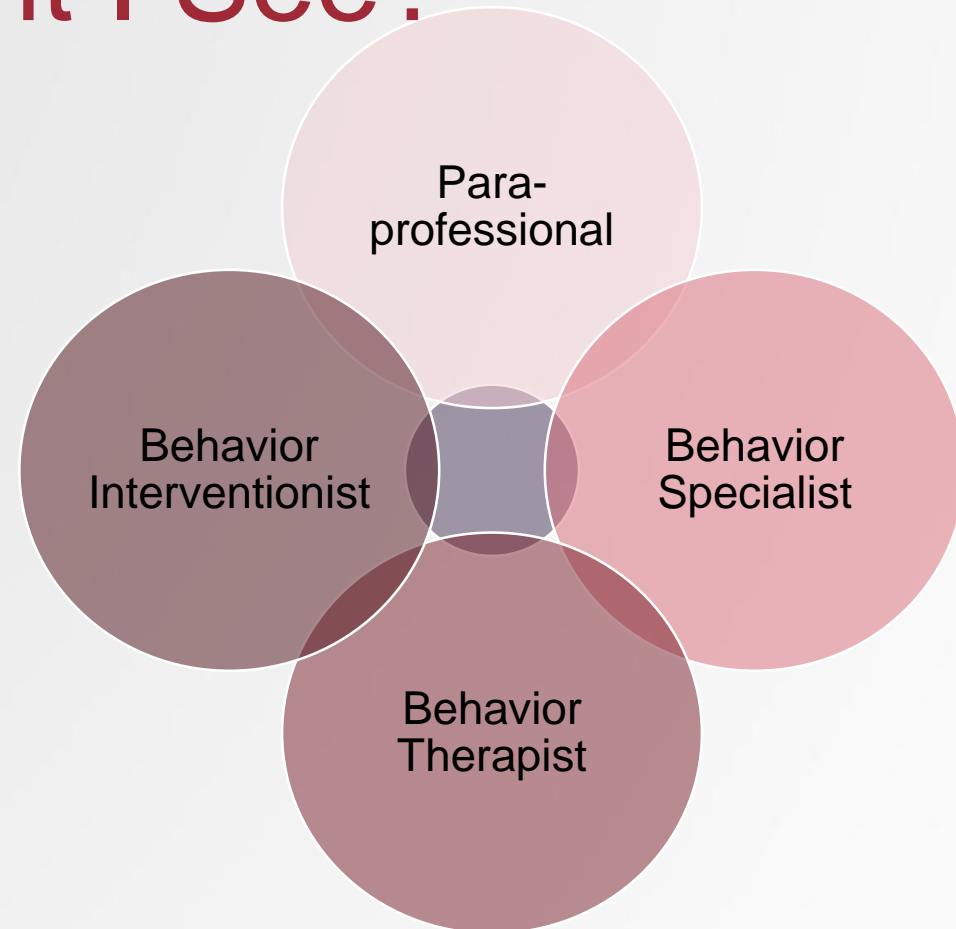
## RBT

- May **NOT** practice independently
- Must be supervised by a BCBA, BCBA-D or BCaBA
- Implement programming



# What Other Titles Might I See?

- Not all titles mean the same thing...
  - Certification
  - Skill Level
  - Training
  - Experience
  - Supervision Requirements
- How to learn more about them...
  - Ask questions





# How to Be a Good Consumer

- Ask questions
- Do some preliminary research
  - [www.asatonline.com](http://www.asatonline.com)
- Be an active member of therapy
- Communicate openly & freely



# ABA: When to Use

- Most often used with children who are not learning naturally from their environment
  - autism spectrum disorders
  - developmental disabilities
- To teach
  - communication
  - social behavior
  - self-help (including toilet training and feeding)
  - basic academic skills



# ABA: How It Works

- ABA works by:
  - Selecting a socially important behavior
  - Examining the behavior in the environment
  - Focusing on the consequences of the behavior
    - Reinforcement
      - What reinforces my child's behaviors?



# ABA: How it Works

- Observation of behaviors in environment
  - Determining function of behavior
  - Modification of environment and teaching new skills (using reinforcement)
  - Planning/ teaching the transference of skills to other environments (generalization)
- 
- Data collection is an important part!



# ABA: What Does It Look Like?

A few commonly used strategies:

- Discrete Trial Training – not the only kind of ABA!
- System of Least Prompts
- Time Delay
- Differential Reinforcement
- Naturalistic Interventions



# Success with ABA

- For best results, parents must be willing to:
  - Work closely with the behavior therapist
  - Provide input on the challenges at home
  - Collect data on behaviors at home
  - Implement strategies at home
  - Persevere – stick it out!





# ABA Works!

- Research shows that ABA strategies work!
- *“Today, ABA is widely recognized as a safe and effective treatment for autism.”*

(Autism Speaks, 2016)



# What is going on in South Dakota

- The State of the State
  - Current law
  - Current providers



# Funding for the Providers: 3 Tiered Model

- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)
- Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA)
- Registered Behavioral Technician (RBT)/Para



# 2014

- Parent and provider group initiated a bill to begin to get ABA coverage following Wellmark announcing they were dropping coverage they had previously been covering
- Initial bill was shot down however the state agreed to fund a study of the issue to be readdressed once results were in



# The State Study

- An outside firm was hired to conduct the study and we feel they did a nice job with being in the state and spending a good deal of time with parents, providers and insurance representatives. For the most part, the study reinforced what we had been saying and prompted a new bill to be introduced in 2015 session.
- [http://dhs.sd.gov/autismtherapyworkgroup/2014AutismStudy/Autism\\_Study\\_Report\\_FINAL\\_11-17-14.pdf](http://dhs.sd.gov/autismtherapyworkgroup/2014AutismStudy/Autism_Study_Report_FINAL_11-17-14.pdf)



# 2015

- The initial bill for the 2015 was actually presented via the governors office after bringing key stakeholders (mainly insurance companies) to the table. The bill offered very little benefit/coverage to kids and families.
- Families lobbied hard to get a stronger version of the bill passed and it was passed in the House but defeated in the Senate (much like the previous year).



## 2015 cont.

- The main point of contention was the insurance companies wanted the providers to be licensed prior to authorizing reimbursement. They did not want to accept the national certification. The state agreed.
- A version of the bill was passed that created a committee to study the licensure process and get this in place. Effective 2016 only direct services provided by a BCBA or licensed provider would be reimbursable.

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[http://legis.sd.gov/Statutes/Codified\\_Laws/DisplayStatute.aspx?Type=Statute&Statute=58-17](http://legis.sd.gov/Statutes/Codified_Laws/DisplayStatute.aspx?Type=Statute&Statute=58-17)



## 2016 Upcoming

- Legislative session Jan 12-Mar 8.
- Licensure will likely be proposed under the Social Work Board who has agreed to house the ABA providers
- Other bills to improve the lives of individuals with Autism in our state





# Our Future

- Work on improving coverage and recognition of ABA services including the 3 tiered service delivery model
- Expanding services into more areas including hard to reach rural areas
- Recruit good service providers and continue to grow the field of ABA
- Address other need areas of individuals and families in South Dakota



# How you can help!

- Join the parent group in South Dakota and become an active member
  - Get to know your legislators/Go talk to them
  - Make phone calls during session when needed
  - Facebook page
    - Parent for Autism Insurance Reform South Dakota
  - Parent email list
    - Lisa Stanley, Parent Advocate and Lobbyist
      - Phone/508-789-3650; email: [lisagstanley@yahoo.com](mailto:lisagstanley@yahoo.com)



## Summary

- Behavior Analysis is much more than most initially think...
- Ask questions and be an active participant
- Take advantage of the resources available
- ABA is well supported by research demonstrating its effectiveness
- South Dakota is making great strides, and there are many more to come in the future!

**QUESTIONS?**



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