

## What is ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a research based, scientific method that began with the work of B.F. Skinner. The science measures observable behavior. It looks at what occurs before a behavior (antecedent) and what happens after a behavior (consequence). In addition, the methods of ABA are applied by breaking down skills into simple steps and teaching each step in succession. Skills are taught with the use of prompting to assist learning. A correct response is followed by positive reinforcement which increases the likelihood that a behavior or response will occur more often in the future. ABC Group uses Errorless Learning in order to decrease frustration, and make teaching and learning a fun activity.

ABA based intervention is validated for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), but is also applicable to children with other developmental disabilities. It is a set of principles and guidelines upon which educational programs are based and should not be used synonymously with a specific program. An ABA program targets specific developmental areas such as:

- Attending skills
- Imitative skills
- Fine motor and gross motor skills
- Language skills
- Conversation skills
- Functional play
- Functional skills/self-help skills
- Social skills
- Theory of Mind/Social Cognition
- Toileting skills
- Problem behaviors

Other names encountered within the field of ABA are: Verbal Behavior (VB), Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT), Natural Environment Teaching (NET), Pivotal Response Teaching (PRT) and Fluency-based instruction. Each use a specific method of instruction and are all based on the principles of ABA.

## What is an ABA/VB Consultant or Behavior Consultant?

In behavioral applications to autism treatment, Behavior Consultant usually refers to the person who designs and manages the intervention program. Currently there is no regulatory body, so anyone can call themselves a "Behavior Consultant". The Behavior Analyst Certification Board offers voluntary certification for Behavior Analysts at the Bachelors and Masters/PhD levels.

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) will have (at minimum) a masters level education including 5 graduate-level behavior analytic courses, approved supervised or mentored experience, and pass a standardized examination. While the type of graduate degree is not specified, many BCBA's will have graduate degrees in Behavior Analysis, Psychology, or Special Education.

A Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCABA) will have (at minimum) a Bachelors degree including required behavior analytic course work, approved supervised or mentored experience, and pass a standardized examination. NOTE: It is strongly recommended that BCABA's work under the supervision of a BCBA. The BACB requires this of all BCABA's.

The Autism Special Interest Group of the Association for Behavior Analysis (International) has Guidelines for Consumers of Applied Behavior Analysis Services to Individuals with Autism and Related Disorders. These



guidelines include recommended education/credentials/training/experience and can be viewed at:  
<http://www.abainternational.org/sub/membersvcs/sig/contactinfo/Autism.asp>

## What is Board Certification?

The Behavior Analyst Certification Board Inc. is a non-profit corporation established as a result of credentialing needs identified by behavior analysts, state governments and consumers of behavior analysis services. The BACB's mission is to develop, promote and implement a voluntary international certification program for behavior analyst practitioners. The BACB credentials BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) and BCABA (Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst). Individuals with a BCBA certificate must have doctoral or master's level education while individuals with BCABA certificate must have bachelor's level education. All BCABAs are required to work under the supervision of a BCBA. Our Clinic Director is BCBA and all Program Managers or Supervisors at ABC Group are either already BCBA, BCABA, or are completing the requirements to prepare for the certification examination. You can find more information at:  
[www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com)

## What is a home program or ABA program?

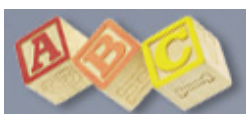
Intervention plans are developed and ABA implemented for a child targeting specific developmental areas (e.g., imitative skills, receptive and expressive language skills, fine motor skills, etc.) which are derived from an assessment of those areas. The program is then implemented or taught within the home of that child. An individual trained to carry out program goals is known as a Behavior Interventionist (BI).

A home program will range between 8 to 40 hours per week depending on the goals developed for a particular child (and family budget). Guided by a ABA/VB Consultant who manages the program, Skills Trainers (ST) will work with a child for a set amount of time per day and week teaching the skills required to attain the goals outlined in the child's program. A Skills Trainer will use various techniques and teaching methods, guided by the science of ABA. They will be taught techniques empirically proven to be effective and for which they are trained and supervised by senior staff who are experienced and skilled.

In addition, a Skills Trainer will work with other team members to support the overall implementation of a child's program. The direct service intervention team consists of a ABA/VB Consultant who develops and monitors the entire program, (may include a Program Supervisor) and who supervises and trains Skills Trainers, and Skills Trainers who teach the specific skills to your child to achieve the goals. A team meeting typically occurs once per month and includes the child's parents, ABA/VB Consultant and/or Program Supervisor, and Skills Trainers. During the team meeting goals are developed and programs reviewed. It is at the team meeting where goals, objectives, strategies and problem solving are discussed to ensure the success of the child and to identify any appropriate changes needed so the child progresses successfully. Some times we may have your skills trainer "training" new trainers and we call this "shadowing" in order for them to gain more experience in the field and to learn from other, more seasoned skills trainers who we would like them to emulate.

## What is the recommended number of hours of intervention per week?

Many research studies have documented the effectiveness of intensive behavior analytic interventions for autism. Howard, Sparkman, Cohen, Green, & Stanislaw, (2005) suggest that, "Findings from early intervention research indicate that intervention that is intensive, long in duration, and delivered directly to children (rather than caregivers) produces better outcomes than intervention that lacks those elements.



However, there is relatively little research on the effects of treatment intensity (hours per week) and duration (how many months or years intervention).

Ivar Lovaas (1987) demonstrated that children receiving 40 hrs per week (for at least 2 years) of intensive behavior analytic intervention made significantly larger gains than those receiving only 10 hrs per week. Furthermore, almost half of the children receiving intensive behavioral intervention achieved outcomes that placed them in the "normal" range of intellectual, communication, and adaptive functioning.

Eikeseth, Smith, Jahr, & Eldevik (2002) delivered behavioral intervention to 13 children with autism (ages 4-7 at beginning of study) for 28 hrs per week for 1 year. Seven of the 13 children (58%), at follow up, achieved scores in the normal range for functioning.

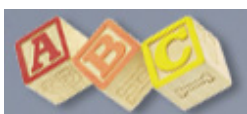
Howard and colleagues (2005) provided 25-30 hrs/week for children under age 3 and 35-40 hrs per week for children over age 3. They also included two control groups. One group received "eclectic" intervention (i.e. TEACCH, some DTT, and sensory integration) in a non-intensive (15 hrs per week) community special education program and one receiving regular special education (30 hrs per week). After 14 months, various outcome measures were substantially and statistically significant for the behavior intervention group but not for either of the control groups. Therefore, the results of this study (and others) demonstrated significant improvements in intellectual functioning, communication skills, and adaptive behavior as a result of behavioral intervention. These gains were larger than those reported by Anderson, Avery, Dipietro, Edwards, and Christian (1987) for preschool children with autism who received behavioral intervention for 15-25 hrs per week for one year.

The intensity of behavioral intervention is important for accelerating a learner's acquisition rate beyond the normal rate in order to close the gap between the learner's skills repertoire and his/her typically developing peers. However, it is unlikely that this gap will be closed within one year's time. This means the duration of intervention will often be 2-3 yrs or more. In the "best case" scenario, this "gap" will be closed and the learner will function at the same level as his/her peers. However, research indicates that fewer than half of children receiving a competently delivered behavioral intervention program will achieve this level of functioning. Regardless, for most children, the gap will continue to be closed as a result of continued behavioral intervention.

On the other hand, at least 2 published studies (Eikeseth et al., 2002 & Howard et al., 2005) have demonstrated that equally intensive alternative or eclectic treatments DO NOT yield comparable results. Worse yet, it is projected that learners in such programs would continue to lose ground to their same aged peers if they continue in such programs.

So, back to the question we started with... what is the recommended number of hours per week? Currently, we don't have adequate research to answer this question on a student-by-student basis. However, the literature tends to support intensive behavioral intervention (i.e. 20-40 hrs per week). In addition, certain learner characteristics need to be considered. For example, learners who are 2 yrs old and those who are 5 yrs old will have differences in the number of hours per week that they can successfully handle.

Generally, more seems to be better. But it is important to note that behavioral intervention continues beyond the number of 1-on-1 "therapy hours". The goal is to create a 24 hr/day 7day/wk (24/7) therapeutic environment. This means actively including parents during "down time" or "weekends". Assuming 12 hrs of sleep per day, there are nearly 90 waking hrs per week. This means the child spends more time with parents than interventionists, even if receiving 40 hrs per week of intensive intervention, ultimately supporting the need for parents to be trained as interventionists, and have the same understanding of the competencies required of the skills trainers and/or ABA/VB Consultants. It is best to be very familiar with the literature in



order to support your requests for funding your ABA program when working with your school or other funding agency.

## Who are the skills trainers (ST)?

STs are the individuals who work directly with your child on a frequent basis implementing programs, lesson plans, and behavior procedures as designed by the ABA/VB Consultant. The STs are trained and supervised on an on-going basis by the ABA/VB Consultant. They should possess a minimum qualification high school diploma and are pursuing a bachelor's degree in a related field such as special education, psychology, early childhood education, etc. and have a strong interest in working with young children. They must have a criminal background check (CBC). Their rates will vary based on their training, experience, skills and responsibilities.

## Who are the ABA/VB Consultants?

Amy Wiech is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), special educator, and clinical director of ABC Group. When you sign a contract with ABC Group, Amy Wiech is the senior ABA/VB consultant and Behavior Analyst. Amy's caseload is full so she is not currently taking new families, but conducting some assessments on an ongoing basis. However she provides supervision and mentoring to a number of ABA/VB Consultants who are either board certified or in the process of completing the requirements to become certified. All ABA/VB Consultants have education in behavior analysis and supervised experience in providing intervention programs. They are assigned as 'case manager' for each child's program. The Behavior Analyst is kept informed about each child's program and his or her progress through direct consultation and monthly team meeting minutes. She acts in a consultative capacity to support, advise, educate, supervise and facilitate the ABA/VB Consultants to ensure the best possible service for a child and his/her family. This allows ABC Group to serve many more families than we otherwise could. Our ABA/VB Consultants are extremely well-qualified and experienced. We feel it is important for you to have access to the combined skills and experience which our team approach can offer. Our ABA/VB Consultants can perform ABLLS-R and VB-MAPP assessments and updates, prepare Intensive Treatment Plans, monitor and update programs, and provide training and supervision to skills trainers.

## How long is your waiting list?

We attempt to provide service to everyone in a fair and timely fashion, but "first-come, first served" cannot always be implemented. Your child is an individual and your family and circumstances will not be the same as anyone else's. It is our job to put together a team who will work well within your family dynamic, your goals for your child, your child's needs and temperament and your budget. We strive to prepare you a team which has that "special connection" with your child and who your child interacts well with. We have staff members serving the needs of families all over the Island of Oahu. How long you wait for service depends on if we have a ABA/VB Consultant working in your area and if they have enough room in their caseload to fully serve your child's needs. We understand that the rules and regulations surrounding your funding make it difficult to wait, however the needs of your child are paramount, and we will not do anything less than our best for your child.

Once you have met with the Director or designate and signed your contract with ABC Group, the average time to implementation of a program is around 4-6 weeks depending on: the completion of the ABLLS-R assessment; the number of programs required to address the objectives for your child; and the hiring and training of Skills Trainers (STs) to implement the programs on a daily basis.





## Do you use a strict Lovaas approach?

No, we don't. Our intervention is applied behavior analysis (ABA) based on Skinner's Analysis of Verbal Behavior, and we use Intensive Teaching (IT), which means discrete trial teaching but conducted a bit differently than DTT, and Natural Environment Teaching (NET). Children do not learn when they are unhappy, bored or stressed. It is our job to make sure that your child has good reasons to want to try new and difficult tasks so we will consider your child's motivation and interests in planning specific activities to help your child learn language, play skills and skills for independence.

## What is Verbal Behavior (VB)? How can I find out more about Verbal Behavior?

You can go to various websites to find out more about verbal behavior. To start with, go to:

[www.christinaburkaba.com](http://www.christinaburkaba.com)

[www.verbalbehaviornetwork.org](http://www.verbalbehaviornetwork.org)

[www.marksundberg.com](http://www.marksundberg.com)

[www.carboneclinic.com](http://www.carboneclinic.com) (see videos on ITT and NET) under multimedia

There is even a Verbal Behavior wiki <http://verbalbehavior.pbwiki.com/>

## What is ABLLS-R Assessment?

The ABLLS-R is the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills- Revised, curriculum guide, and skills tracking system for children diagnosed with autism and other developmental disabilities. The ABLLS was developed by James W. Partington, Ph.D. and Mark L. Sundberg, Ph.D. in 1998 and the 2006 revision was completed by James W. Partington, PhD. The ABLLS-R assessment provides the opportunity to investigate many skills necessary for a child to communicate with others and to gain new functional skills for independence and academic learning. Skills for the following areas are investigated: Cooperation and Reinforcer Effectiveness; Basic Language skills; Social skills; Academic; Self-Help and Motor Skills. There are 25 repertoire areas assessed.

## How long does it take to conduct ABLLS-R Assessment?

The ABLLS-R Assessment is conducted over two to three sessions which are each about two hours long. Some usually take between 8-20 hours, depending on the child's language skills. During the first two sessions the ABA/VB Consultant assesses child's current skill level in the area of language, basic learning skills, academic and motor abilities. Parents and caregivers can often provide information about the child's self-help skills, and score these areas with the assistance of the ABA/VB Consultant. Parents are encouraged to share their concerns and to identify their priorities regarding the objectives for intervention. Caregivers will be asked when they would like the assessment of their child's social skills. This assessment is usually conducted in the



student's preschool or school where the ABA/VB Consultant observes how the child interacts with peers and follows group or individual instruction, and class routines.

## **How and where is ABLLS-R Assessment conducted?**

The ABLLS-R assessment is conducted by a qualified ABA/VB Consultant, who has been assigned by ABC Group to work with the child. The ABLLS-R assessments are conducted at the at the child's school or home with the caregivers or teachers present. The parents can choose to be present at the time of testing. The ABLLS-R assessment involves direct observation of the child's skills, thus it is important to first establish rapport with the learner. The ABA/VB Consultant will evaluate the child's skill level using both academic materials and various toys and games in which the child shows high interest. Skills are examined at the table by giving specific instruction and also by more natural method, such as structured and purposeful play.

## **What will the family receive after the ABLLS-R has been completed?**

Upon completion of the ABLLS-R assessment parents will be provided with the ABLLS-R protocol (record booklet) containing criterion – referenced information regarding the child's current skills, and the Intensive Treatment Plan (ITP) developed by the ABA/VB Consultant who has been assigned to work with the child. The ITP lists educational objectives based on the assessment of the learner's current level of abilities. The plan contains detailed information of each objective, explanation of the teaching procedures, materials that are required to implement the program, and mastery criteria for each skill.

## **How much will my program cost? What is the average cost of a program?**

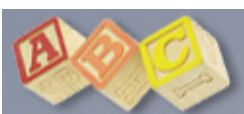
Once again, your program will be an individualized treatment plan for your child. We do not use a 'one size fits all' approach. We will do our best to work with your budget, however it is simply not possible to give you a decision regarding costs before meeting your child, discussing your goals and obtaining some baseline data through assessment. A similar life example might be: if you buy a pre-fabricated sofa at Macy's, you know from the price tag how much it will cost you. If you wanted a custom-made piece of furniture, you would have to make lots of decisions and provide lots of information to the carpenter before he could give you a quote. We will ask you what your budget allows each month for your child's program and then we will tell you the hours of service we can provide within that budget.

## **How does your fee structure work?**

Ultimately, our goal is to work with you to keep program management fees as low as possible in order to maximize individual therapy hours while maintaining the quality and integrity of the program.

## **Can I save money by having a team meeting once every two months or by hiring untrained interventionists?**

No! The team meeting is an essential part of the program, for the reasons outlined above. You need to know that you are an essential part of your child's team, and you need to be kept knowledgeable about the program, and have an opportunity to contribute your experience and knowledge of your child to the team. When we devise an ITP for your child, we are designing a program that includes the hours of intervention that fit your budget, time for program development, data collection and analysis, and team meetings to communicate and ensure progress of your child. None of these activities is optional. It is important that you understand the





meetings are intended to ensure you and all the team members understand the programs, intervention strategies and progress as well as address any concerns that may arise during the month.

We do, sometimes, have trained Skills Trainers (STs) available to work as part of your child's team. Skills Trainers associated with ABC Group have the benefit not only of ongoing supervision and training for your child's program, but also have access to regular training opportunities at ABC Group. ABC Group maintains a criminal record check for all employed Skills Trainers.

## **What set-up fee can I expect?**

There are significantly higher costs associated with starting a program of therapy than for supporting the intervention once the program is in place. The assessment tools which were used to diagnose your child do not provide sufficient information to develop an ITP to write the Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). We use the ABLLS-R to develop an ITP and update that assessment regularly to chart progress and gather data. Your Program Manager or Supervisor will need to spend much more time in the first two or three months to assess and observe your child, meet with you, and prepare a report for your records, provide overlapping sessions with interventionists for training, supervise and help to implement the program.

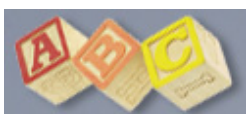
We do not charge a "set up fee" as some other companies do, however, we charge by the hour for set up. Usually it takes between 8-20 hours to conduct an ABLLS-R assessment and the report write up is usually between 2-4 hours.

## **How long will it take before my child will speak/use the potty/stop throwing tantrums?**

No professional can or should give you absolute guarantees about any aspect of your child's development or behavior. We will use the science of ABA to collect data which informs our decisions and to select techniques and strategies to assist you child in acquiring effective behaviors and skills for independence. We will use the regular team meetings as a time to share information, raise questions and concerns, and plan intervention strategies. You can expect your child to show progress in the areas of his/her goals over time and we will monitor the progress with regular data collection. Our aim is to help your child to realize his or her full potential, and find ways to interact with, participate in school/social opportunities and thrive in the world.

## **Applying for services from ABC Group**

If you wish to apply to ABC Group Services for your child, please complete the intake form on at [www.AutismBehaviorConsulting.com](http://www.AutismBehaviorConsulting.com) and forward to [info@autismbehaviorconsulting.com](mailto:info@autismbehaviorconsulting.com) or mail to the address listed on the intake form. Your form will be reviewed within two weeks and you will be notified if there is an ABC Group ABA/VB Consultant in your area who has room in their caseload. Thank you for your interest in our services.



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