



What is Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)?

ABA is the design, implementation, and evaluation of environmental modifications to produce socially significant improvement in human behavior. ABA includes the use of direct observation, measurement, and functional analysis of the relations between environment and behavior. ABA uses changes in environmental events, including antecedent stimuli and consequences, to produce practical and significant changes in behavior. These relevant environmental events are usually identified through a variety of specialized assessment methods. ABA is based on the fact that an individual's behavior is determined by past and current environmental events in conjunction with organic variables such as their genetic endowment and ongoing physiological variables. ABA focuses on treating behavioral difficulties by changing the individual's environment rather than focusing on variables that are, at least presently, beyond our direct access.

The successful remediation of core deficits of ASD, and the development or restoration of abilities, documented in hundreds of peer-reviewed studies published over the past 50 years has made ABA the standard of care for the treatment of ASD (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Inc. 2012).

How does the Great Lakes Center use ABA to treat my child?

By modifying what happens before the behavior occurs and what happens after the behavior occurs, we can change the behavior itself.

- Sometimes that means teaching or increasing a behavior (for example, communication, self-care, basic learner skills, and social skills).
- Sometimes that means reducing a challenging behavior (for example, tantrums, aggression, self-injury, property destruction).

When teaching new behaviors, we allow many opportunities for the child to practice the skill.

- Rewards are provided for practicing the skill correctly.
- If the child practices the skill incorrectly, the therapist shows him/her how to do it the right way and may help the child complete the skill correctly with physical guidance.
- This takes place in different locations with different people so the child learns to use the skill in natural settings (for example, if we're teaching a child to wash their hands we might practice at the sink in the bathroom and in the kitchen; if we're teaching how to make eye contact we might practice during work time and play time).





Coordinating your child's treatment

Your participation in your child's treatment is crucial. You will be required to participate in caregiver treatment for the entire duration of your child's services. Your clinician will work with you to teach you the foundations of using ABA to manage behaviors and teach skills. The amount of caregiver training will typically increase throughout your child's treatment to ensure a smooth transition into the child's next learning environment. With your permission, your child's teacher, other service providers, siblings, and other caregivers/family members may also be involved in coordinating treatment. Caregivers should be able to commit at least an hour a week for parent training, by appointment.