



A guide to in-home ABA therapy

A family-centered approach



Pediatricians, family physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants all play a role in guiding and referring families to high-quality, evidence-based treatments.



A family-centric approach to ABA treatment for autism spectrum disorder

According to the CDC, one in 54 children, eight years of age has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Given the prevalence and nature of ASD, providing early diagnosis and referral for treatment have become leading pediatric care issues. Healthcare providers have the best opportunity to screen, diagnose, and connect families affected by ASD to effective treatment. The initial ASD diagnosis is often made by developmental pediatricians, family physicians, psychologists, and neurologists. These professionals must refer and guide families towards selecting evidence-based ASD treatment options during a critical time in their child's development. The purpose of this paper is to provide professionals that make initial ASD diagnoses information on the benefits of a family-centered, evidence-based, home-based ABA treatment program.

Applied behavior analysis and the *treatment of ASD*

Among available treatments for autism, applied behavior analysis (ABA) interventions have demonstrated rigorous empirical and clinical support. According to the Association for Science in Autism Treatment, five decades of controlled studies in university and community settings have demonstrated the effectiveness of ABA interventions in helping remediate social and language impairments, as well as assisting children in making sustained gains in IQ, academic performance, and adaptive skills, as compared with children in control groups (Carr & LeBlanc, 2007; Myers & Johnson, 2007; Munshi, Gonzalez-Heydrick, Augenstein, & D'Angelo, 2011).

ABA therapy comes in many forms. However, there's growing evidence suggesting that effective ABA programs include the following characteristics (Myers & Johnson, 2007):

- Interventions starting as early as possible
- Parent-driven and caregiver-driven training
- Intensive teaching of at least 25 hours per week
- Emphasis on functional communication and social skills, including self-management, cognitive, and adaptive techniques to increase independence
- Strategies to reduce disruptive behaviors at home and in the community

About *family-centered* ABA treatment

Family-centered treatment incorporates these critical components of effective ABA while providing families with training and support in a more natural, home-based learning environment. Under the guidance and coordination of the treatment team, parents and caregivers become better equipped to build nurturing relationships with their young children, teach their child complex skills within the context of daily routines, and learn to respond effectively to challenging behaviors.

Upon intake, the ABA treatment team conducts observations of a child and family during their everyday routines. The team observes some of the normal daily home disruptions associated with the core symptoms of autism (e.g., difficulty communicating, feeding and mealtime disruptions, and self-care/play/academic routines). Our team interviews the family and identifies their primary concerns and treatment goals. A family-centered treatment plan is developed, building on the child's strengths, and incorporating the family's priorities, customs, and beliefs. Treatment plans also take into consideration parent participation capacity and service expectations. The highly individualized home-based treatment plan is designed to accommodate each family's unique culture and desired outcomes for the child's engagement at home and in the community, including allowing for more exposure to non-disabled peers, extended family members, and different settings. There also is greater flexibility in a home-based setting, since the child learns to adjust to sessions that vary with everyday events and have natural interruptions.

During treatment, the family experiences regular hands-on training with their child and the ABA professional. Parents and caregivers work side-by-side with therapists to implement intervention naturally throughout the child's day. Consistent, ongoing measurement and data analysis of the child's current skills and functioning occur as they learn new skills and replacements for challenging and problem behaviors. An effective family-centric ABA program empowers families by providing them with a leading treatment implementation role. Instead of skill development occurring only when the therapist is present, family members can seamlessly integrate treatment throughout the child's day.

Family-centered ABA programs also focus on a child's long-term success. As the child progresses, treatment planning regularly includes generalization of learned skills to socially significant settings (e.g., peers, at school, neighborhood errands, and community events). Programming also includes training parents and caregivers on techniques to ensure that a child maintains previously learned skills over time. Given that caregivers play a leading implementation role throughout treatment, family-centered ABA programs demonstrate lasting improvements and success across a child's lifetime.

About Butterfly Effects

Butterfly Effects (BE) has a 15-year history of improving the lives of children and families affected by autism spectrum disorder (ASD) through a family-centric applied behavior analysis (ABA) approach. Butterfly Effects has provided home-based ABA therapy to thousands of families across 12 states. Our agency employs over 100 board-certified behavior analysts (BCBAs) and 800 techs to 1,000+ behavior technicians. BE's treatment principles focus on providing family-centered ABA therapy in the child's natural setting, using an evidence-based curriculum to gain functional outcomes, in a manner that best suits the family's needs and capacity.



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