

What is an In-home ABA Program?

History

Early research in the use of behavioral intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders showed that parental involvement was essential if generalization and maintenance of new skills was to be achieved. As a result, instead of providing services in a treatment center, clinicians began to introduce teaching sessions to the home environment.

Goal

The purpose of an in-home ABA program is to embed instruction into routines at home to the greatest extent possible and teach family members how to continue the teaching strategies outside of formal teaching sessions. By being in the home the treatment team can also make sure that teaching programs address the priority needs of the child in the home setting.

Team

If a child requires intensive intervention then ABA tutors will run teaching sessions at home under the supervision of the BCBA consultant in addition to parents receiving training and coaching in the use of ABA strategies during their daily interactions with their child. In-home sessions will have a strong emphasis on language, play and communication in the natural environment, but as children get older assistance with academic skills also may be provided. Potty training, self-management and other independent skills may also form a big part of an in-home ABA program.

Environmental Arrangement

An in-home program requires that the home environment is arranged to promote learning opportunities. Among other things, that might involve putting toys out of reach, preventing free access to snacks, placing visual supports around your home, and participating in reward systems that are meaningful to your child. It is common to choose a room in the house that serves as a teaching area for academic instruction and structured teaching, though this not always necessary. These environmental arrangements will be prescribed by your BCBA consultant as part of the training and supervision provided. They are a very important piece of the intervention program.

Role of the family

When families hire tutors directly an in-home program may be cheaper than a clinic-based program. This is partially due to the active role played by parents. The acquisition, organization and maintenance of the teaching materials, the printing of paperwork, the up-keep of the data binder, and sharing of data with the consultant are the responsibility of the parents. This may mean that the parents take on these tasks themselves, or that they pay their tutors to do so. Again, team leader tasks such as these will be clearly laid out by the BCBA consultant as part of the training and supervision.



What is an in-home ABA tutor?

Who are they?

In-home ABA teams should include at least 2 ABA tutors. These people are often students or recent graduates in education, psychology, speech therapy or other related subjects. They can also be aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents scheduled for regular teaching sessions. Due to lack of insurance coverage families usually choose to contract directly with ABA tutors to save on expenses. Tutor rates are agreed between the family and the tutor and typically range from \$12.00 - \$20.00 per hour, though may be higher for those with extensive training and experience. Families may be lucky to find ABA tutor candidates with extensive experience in ABA instruction. Often however candidates are new to the field with perhaps some exposure to ABA teaching strategies in the school setting. Ideally at least one of the tutors will come with experience in the field. This will cut down on additional training costs. ABA tutors receive ongoing training and supervision from the BCBA consultant. At a minimum this is during tri-weekly team meetings and weekly to monthly video consultations. Additional hands on training may be needed for challenging teaching situations and can be arranged on an as needed basis at the consultant's hourly rate.

What do they do?

The tutors and the family receive ongoing training from the ABA consultant during regular team meetings and online video consultations. Between team meetings the tutors come to the family home for several hours a week, for 1.5 to 2 hours at a time to implement strategies that have been demonstrated and discussed at the team meetings. A program folder is kept by the family and contains descriptions of goals and teaching strategies developed by the behavior analyst with the input of the team (i.e. family members and tutors). The program folder also contains completed datasheets and the graphs showing the child's progress on each of the program goals.

Why?

Parents often question why they should recruit students or those without formal training in behavior analysis to implement their intervention programs. There are two main reasons. Firstly, the research supporting ABA as an intervention for young children with autism used undergraduate level direct-service personnel trained and supervised by the consultant (so there is plenty of evidence that this works), secondly, it is unreasonable for families or agencies to have to pay masters level practitioners for 10 or more hours a week to work directly with a child unless the severity of their challenging behavior is such that only people with many years of training can be expected to do the intervention. Thirdly, a few sessions a week working 1:1 with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst will not result in significant gains for the child unless the procedures used in these sessions are implemented consistently across the child's day by everyone who interacts with the child. The role of the behavior analyst is to conduct careful assessments so that the right intervention methods can be used, to ensure that the interventions are implemented properly by providing ongoing hands-on training to all team



members, to closely monitor the child's progress and to make changes accordingly. The role of the ABA tutors is to conduct the sessions as they are trained to do, to collect data so that progress can be carefully monitored, and to make the sessions as fun as possible for the child. This model of intervention provides a high level of consistency and focused intervention with the necessary intensity for learning to occur quickly. It also ensures that the skills learned in sessions can be demonstrated with lots of different people. This generalization training is really important for children with ASD who can often have great difficulty transferring new skills to different situations.

How often?

Research suggests at least 20 hours a week (and up to 40 hours) of intervention is optimal, but in reality, family time, family financial resources, time spent in other therapies, time spent in school, and child characteristics all contribute to finding the best fit for a particular family. If your child needs intensive intervention you should aim for 10 or more hours a week of ABA tutor time in addition to the intervention received as part of an IEP or IFSP. Some families are unable to hire additional help but try to provide as many hours of intervention as they can embedded into their everyday routines. However, most families feel that they need extra help to implement intervention consistently and for a sufficient number of hours a day. Little Red Car ABA Services consultants are happy to work with families to find an arrangement that works best for them, however, unless there is enough people-power to implement intervention in a coordinated, consistent manner on a daily basis, across settings, the impact of behavior analysis services will likely be limited.

