

Why is ABA Considered the “Gold Standard” in Autism Treatment?



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Every child with autism spectrum disorder is unique and not all need the same combination of treatments to make progress. Much depends on a child’s individual strengths and needs.

What *is* generally the same across the board is that parents of children with ASD, like all parents, want their children to reach their highest potential.

Although many treatments claim to improve outcomes, **applied behavior analysis (ABA) continues to be the first treatment recommended following a diagnosis of autism.** Because it has been studied for decades and has the largest body of research to support its efficacy, it is considered the gold standard in autism treatment.

Early ABA intervention significantly improves a child’s long-term outcomes. Treatment is designed to establish and increase skills across many areas,

including but not limited to communication, cognitive skills, activities of daily living (such as dressing and toileting), social skills and play/leisure skills.

Treatment is typically delivered intensively at 25-40 hours per week. This is considered a comprehensive ABA program and is intended to “close the gap” between where a child is functioning compared to his or her peers. Not all children will need this many hours of treatment, especially if they appear to be benefiting from more naturalistic learning opportunities.

ABA treatment can also effectively reduce challenging behaviors that negatively impact the quality of life for children and their families. Many children with autism struggle with transitions and tolerating limits, and often exhibit severely restricted eating and sleeping habits. They may also have physical behaviors that pose safety concerns. A focused ABA treatment plan targets specific behaviors that are in need of reduction in order for the child to have an improved quality of life.

Family involvement is critical for the success of ABA treatment. Skills must be generalized across all settings and among people in the child’s life to become and remain established. Parents must understand that their behavior and the home environment are important factors to help ABA treatment be successful.



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