

April 29, 2009

David B. Hatfield, Ph.D.
Clinical Psychologist and Board Certified Behavior Analyst
17895 Queensmere Drive, Monument, Colorado 80132
719-266-0443 home
719-527-2121 work

What is applied behavior analysis (ABA)?

- “Applied behavior analysis” means the design, implementation, and evaluation of systematic environmental modifications by a behavior analyst to produce socially significant improvements in human behavior. We determine functional relations between behavior and environmental factors. Applied behavior analysis interventions are based on scientific research and the direct observation and measurement of behavior and environment. We help people develop new behaviors, increase or decrease existing behaviors, and present those behaviors only under certain conditions. In short, ABA is based on the premise that behavior happens because it works. Our job is to determine how, when, where, and in essence, why?
 - Example of biting arm to communicate pain or request attention.
 - Example of teaching a child to eat more than 3 food items.
- Behavior analysis is a distinct discipline and professional practice with its own research methods, professional organizations, credentialing program, and professional journals. It is not the same as clinical psychology, educational or school psychology, counseling, social work, special education, psychiatry, etc.
 - Science of human behavior.
- ABA practices are derived from more than 60 years of basic and applied research.
 - Recommended by US Surgeon General, American Academy of Pediatrics, and National Academy of Science
- Autism intervention is just one of many areas of application.
 - Behavior Medicine, Clinical Behavior Analysis, Performance Management, etc.
- Some intervention techniques and programs included in ABA therapy for autism include reinforcement, differential reinforcement, token reinforcement, noncontingent reinforcer delivery, contingency management, prompting and prompt fading, shaping, task analysis, forward and backward chaining, stimulus control procedures, errorless training, error correction, extinction, modeling, incidental teaching and other naturalistic procedures, milieu teaching, discrete trial procedures, self-monitoring, self-management, activity schedules, scripting and script-fading, peer social skills training, peer-mediated instruction, behavioral momentum, task interspersal, habit reversal, systematic desensitization, interruption and redirection, fluency training, Precision Teaching, Picture Exchange Communication System, Pivotal Response Training, Applied Verbal Behavior, Lovaas treatment, early intensive behavioral intervention, and more (Green and Howard, *personal communiqué*).
 - All theoretically linked through the Science of Human Behavior.

- ABA is not educational though it may be used in schools. PT, ST, OT are not educational though they are used in schools. Nurses supplying medical services are not educational though they may do so in a school. All of these providers serve as access providers, allowing students to acquire FAPE. A Free and Appropriate Public Education for federal law.
 - ABA is like engineering; there are a lot of different applications all linked by basic scientific principals.
- The Education system
 - is not required by law to remediate core symptoms of ASD
 - is required only to address education objectives, not all areas of functioning affected by ASD, and not healthcare needs (e.g., toileting, eating, sleeping, hygiene, safety, cooperating with medical procedures, etc.)
 - is responsible for children with ASD only Mon.- Fri. for a few hours each day, part of the year. ASD is 24/7, year around.
 - lacks resources to provide comprehensive, evidence-based intervention shown to be medically necessary for ASD (Green and Howard, *personal communiqué*).
- ABA interventions have proved effective for ameliorating core symptoms of ASD and problem behaviors that jeopardize the health and safety of people with ASD, and for building skills that improve health and functioning and prevent deterioration (Green and Howard, *personal communiqué*).
- At least 20 self-insured companies provide ABA benefit, recognize BCBAs as providers, same as licensed professionals
- 10 states have legislation mandating private health insurance coverage of ABA
 - IN, SC, TX, FL, AZ, LA, PA, IL, NM, MT
 - Dollar and age caps vary across states
- National certification programs for ABA practitioners already exist at no cost to the State of Colorado
 - We don't need to license; we can use an existing national board just like OT and ST already use
 - Behavior Analysis Certification Board

The financially and ethically prudent thing to do is support this bill. It will save the State of Colorado billions of dollars and create a brighter future for thousands of Coloradoans' with Autism and their families.