

ABA Therapy for Autism is Nationally Accepted and Approved

Many governmental agencies, scientific institutions and professional organizations have concluded, based on the empirical evidence, that behavioral intervention therapies, and specifically ABA-based procedures, are efficacious and represent best clinical practices for individuals with autism.

The Surgeon General of the United States

The Surgeon General serves as America's Doctor by providing Americans the best scientific information available on how to improve their health and reduce the risk of illness and injury. The Surgeon General has issued a Report on Mental Health, which is the product of collaboration between the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and The National Institutes of Health (NIH), which supports and conducts research on mental illness and mental health through the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

The Surgeon General Report recognizes autism as a severe, chronic developmental disorder, which results in significant lifelong disability. The goal of treatment is to promote the child's social and language development and minimize behaviors that are maladaptive and interfere with the child's functioning at home and at school. The Surgeon General's position on behavior therapy, based on thirty years of research is that sustained behavioral therapy and applied behavior analysis (ABA), early in life is effective in reducing inappropriate behavior and in acquiring language skills, increasing communication, ability to learn, and appropriate social behavior. See <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/chapter3/sec6.html#autism>

National Institute of Mental Health

The mission of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is to further the understanding and treatment of mental illness through clinical and basic research. Utilizing the evidence and results from their research, their goal is to create a path toward prevention, recovery, and cure for mental illness.

NIMH recognizes that applied behavior analysis (ABA) has become widely accepted as an effective treatment for individuals with autism. The goal of behavioral management is to reinforce desirable behaviors and reduce undesirable ones. Effective programs will teach early communication and social interaction skills. In children younger than 3 years, appropriate interventions usually take place in the home or a child care center. These interventions target specific deficits in learning, language, imitation, attention, motivation, compliance, and initiative of interaction. Included are behavioral methods, communication, occupational and physical therapy along with social play interventions. Often the day will begin with a physical activity to help develop coordination and body awareness; children string beads, piece puzzles together, paint, and participate in other motor skills activities. At snack time the teacher encourages social interaction and models how to use language to ask for more juice. The children learn by doing. Working with the children are students, behavioral therapists, and parents who have received extensive training. Positive reinforcement is used in teaching the children. See <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/autism/treatment-options.shtml>

American Psychological Association

Based in Washington, D.C., the American Psychological Association (APA) is a scientific and professional organization that represents psychology in the United States. APA's mission APA is to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit

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society and improve people's lives. With more than 54,000 members, it is the largest association of psychologists worldwide.

The APA believes that medications on their own rarely improve behavior, so behavioral interventions are crucial. Many treatment programs emphasize "operant conditioning," which uses rewards to encourage good behavior and punishments to discourage bad behavior. APA's position is consistent with the Surgeon General's report on autism treatment. The APA also concurs with the findings of psychologist Ivar Lovaas, Ph.D. First developed in the 1960s by Dr. Lovaas, at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), ABA therapy for autism makes use of the idea that when people--autistic or otherwise--are rewarded for a behavior, they are likely to repeat that behavior. In ABA treatment, the therapist gives the child a stimulus--like a question or a request to sit down--along with the correct response. The therapist uses attention, praise or a tangible incentive like toys or food to reward the child for repeating the right answer or completing the task; any other response is ignored. In a landmark 1987 study, Lovaas found that nearly half the children who received 40 hours per week of ABA therapy were eventually able to complete normal first-grade classes, while none of children who received the therapy only 10 hours per week were able to do the same. See <http://www.apa.org/monitor/dec04/autism.aspx>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the nation's leading professional, credentialing, and scientific organization for speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech/language/hearing scientists. ASHA has been initiating the development of national standards for audiologists and for speech-language pathologists and certifying professionals for 55 years.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's Speech-language pathologists prioritize assessment and intervention. They draw on empirically supported approaches to meet specific needs of children with autism. Speech-language pathologists assist communication partners in recognizing the potential communicative functions of challenging behavior and designing environments to support positive behavior. This treatment option comes from their article from the *American Speech-Language-Hearing Association*. (2004). Preferred practice patterns for the profession of speech-language pathology <http://www.asha.org/policy>.

Autism Society of America

The Autism Society, the nation's leading grassroots autism organization, exists to improve the lives of all affected by autism. They focus on increasing public awareness about the day-to-day issues faced by people on the autism spectrum, advocating for appropriate services for individuals across the lifespan, and providing the latest information regarding treatment, education, research and advocacy. The Autism Society is the leading source of trusted and reliable information about autism. Through its strong chapter network, the Autism Society has spearheaded numerous pieces of state and local legislation, including the 2006 Combating Autism Act, the first federal autism-specific law. The Autism Society's website is one of the most visited websites on autism in the world and its quarterly journal has a broad national readership.

The Autism Society of America believes that Applied Behavior Therapy (ABA) now is the most recognized and scientifically supported treatment for autism. By changing the antecedents and consequences of behaviors symptomatic of autism, ABA specialists teach children the skills in which they are delayed, thereby replacing challenging and aberrant behaviors with functional

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and adaptive skills. Research has shown that with early intensive ABA therapy, a large percent of children with autism fully recover and lead healthy lives. See <http://support.autism-society.org/site/Search?query=ABA+therapy&inc=10>

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke Center

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) conducts and supports research on brain and nervous system disorders. Created by the United States Congress in 1950, NINDS is one of the more than two dozen research institutes and centers that comprise the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH, located in Bethesda, Maryland, is an agency of the Public Health Service within the United States Department of Health and Human Services. NINDS has occupied a central position in the world of neuroscience for more than 50 years. NINDS also works with the National Institute of Mental Health to collaborate and share research findings and methods of treatment for serious mental illnesses.

NINDS' stance on the treatment of autism is one that is supportive of the findings of the Lovaas Institute. This stance is also consistent with the National Institute Mental Health. These findings include viewing applied behavior analysis (ABA) as widely accepted as an effective treatment for autism. See <http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism/autism.htm>

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

The NICHD was initially established to investigate the broad aspects of human development as a means of understanding developmental disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the events that occur during pregnancy. Today, the Institute conducts and supports research on all stages of human development, from preconception to adulthood, to better understand the health of children, adults, families, and communities. The NICHD has achieved an impressive array of scientific advances in its pursuit to enhance lives throughout all stages of human development, improving the health of children, adults, families, communities, and populations. Research supported and conducted by the NICHD has helped to explain the unique health needs of many, and has brought about novel and effective ways to fulfill them.

In general the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development concludes that behavior management therapy works to reinforce wanted behaviors and reduce unwanted behaviors. At the same time, these methods also suggest what caregivers should do before or between episodes of problem behaviors, and what to do during or after these episodes. Behavioral therapy is often based on Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). NICHD believes that ABA therapy is a way to help minimize the symptoms of autism and to maximize learning. See http://www.nichd.nih.gov/search.cfm?search_string=ABA+therapy

Lovaas Institute

The Lovaas Institute has performed rigorous research at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) under the direction of Dr. Ivar Lovaas, for decades, proving its effectiveness in treating children with autism. Treatment follows the procedures described by Dr. Lovaas, published along with long-term outcome data in peer-reviewed journals, and supported by additional long-term outcome research as recently as 2006. Dr. Lovaas and his staff have conducted countless studies and published more than 500 articles in the field of Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA). The Lovaas Model of ABA is based on 40 years of research and is backed by published studies showing that half of children with autism who receive this intensive treatment become indistinguishable from other children on tests of cognitive and social skills by the time they complete first grade.

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The Lovaas Institute is a proponent of ABA because they have demonstrated that a sizable group of children diagnosed with autism, pervasive developmental disorders and related developmental disorders have been able to achieve normal educational and intellectual functioning by 7 years of age because of ABA therapy. The Lovaas Institute personnel help develop a child's language and social interactions with parents and peers while reducing interfering behaviors such as tantrums. Their research shows these children have been mainstreamed into regular classrooms and have advanced successfully through the school system without additional assistance. After ABA treatment, children show significant increases in intellectual functioning and perform within normal ranges on standardized tests of intelligence. They also appear indistinguishable from their peers in measures of social and emotional functioning. Even for children who do not reach the level of typically-developing peers, their quality of life is greatly improved from what they learn through ABA; sizable decreases in inappropriate behaviors and acquisition of basic language skills are most often achieved. These children become more active members of their family and are usually able to learn in less restrictive special education classrooms or supervised regular education classrooms. See <http://www.lovaas.com/approach-detailed.php>

The Kennedy Krieger Institute

The Kennedy Krieger Institute is an internationally recognized hospital, research, and teaching institution located in Baltimore, Maryland with outpatient clinics specializing in neurobehavioral health services. A renowned authority in research on behalf of children with brain, spinal cord and musculoskeletal related disorders, Kennedy Krieger also provides professional training by eminent experts. Faculty at Kennedy Krieger are among some of the world's leading experts in this field having made crucial medical discoveries leading to innovative treatments involving individuals with disabilities.

The treatment of autistic patients at Kennedy Krieger Institute emphasizes applied behavior analysis (ABA). The institute's official position is that ABA is a form of therapy that has been shown to reduce problem behavior and increase appropriate skills for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Their research, along with the large body of studies into ABA treatment, provides empirical evidence indicating that procedures developed using ABA-based principles are effective at assessing and treating a variety of maladaptive behaviors engaged in by individuals with a variety of diagnoses, including autism, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. See <http://www.kennedykrieger.org>

Center for Autism and Related Disorders

The Center's CARD I and CARD II programs include comprehensive and cutting-edge curricula that can be tailored to the specific needs of individuals from birth to 21 years of age. These programs help children learn to communicate, develop friendships, and lead happy, healthy lives. CARD Specialized Outpatient Services (SOS) provides assistance with specific areas of concern for a family and develops and implements strategies to diminish problem behaviors and teach necessary skills. Its Director, Dr. Doreen, studied autism treatment for 12 years under the direction of renowned autism treatment scientist Dr. Ivar Lovaas at the University of California, Los Angeles. Dr. Lovaas discovered that intensive early intervention using applied behavior analysis treatment yielded a 47 percent recovery rate among children with autism who participated in his study. Building off these findings, Dr. Doreen and her associates developed the CARD treatment curriculum for children diagnosed with autism. Their methodology and treatment forms are based on the Lovaas model of applied behavior analysis (ABA).

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CARD is committed to remaining at the forefront of research on ABA-based methods of autism assessment and treatment. In August 2009, CARD researchers published a study documenting recovery in a large group of children with autism. The primary focus of their research is ABA-based methods of assessment and treatment. They believe treatment approaches grounded in ABA are now considered to be at the forefront of therapeutic and educational interventions for children with autism. In general, this behavioral framework utilizes manipulation of antecedents and consequences of behavior to teach new skills and eliminate maladaptive and excessive behaviors. The Discrete Trial is a particular ABA teaching strategy which enables the learner to acquire complex skills and behaviors by first mastering the subcomponents of the targeted skill. See <http://www.centerforautism.com/card-approach.php>

Association for Science in Autism Treatment

ASAT is a not-for-profit organization of parents and professionals committed to improving the education, treatment, and care of people with autism. Its mission is to educate parents, professionals, and consumers by disseminating accurate, scientifically-sound information about autism and its treatment and by combating inaccurate or unsubstantiated information. In doing so, ASAT promotes the use of effective, science-based treatments for all people with autism, regardless of age, severity of condition, income or place of residence.

ASAT agrees with studies that show ABA is effective in increasing adaptive behaviors and teaching new skills. In addition, many studies demonstrate that ABA is effective in reducing problem behavior. A number of studies also indicate that, when implemented early in life, ABA may produce large gains in development and reductions in the need for special services. ASAT maintains ABA is an effective intervention for many individuals with autism spectrum disorders. ABA interventions should be supervised by behavior analysts. See <http://www.asatonline.org/intervention/treatments/applied.htm>

National Alliance of Autism Research

Autism Speaks was founded in February 2005 by Bob and Suzanne Wright, grandparents of a child with autism. Since then, Autism Speaks has grown into the nation's largest autism science and advocacy organization, dedicated to funding research into the causes, prevention, treatments and cure for autism; increasing awareness of autism spectrum disorders; and advocating for the needs of individuals with autism and their families.

Autism Speaks uses a network of treatment called the Interactive Autism Network (IAN) a project collecting information online from families of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) from throughout the United States, containing reports on the use of speech and language therapy. Autism Speaks has ranked ABA therapy in the top three most used methods for effective treatment of autism. Moreover, their verbal behavior therapy is based on the applied behavior analysis (ABA), method of treatment. They therefore acknowledge the efficacy of ABA therapy and have adapted and modified its use to gain the desired results in improving verbal skills by intensive behavior treatment. See http://www.autismspeaks.org/search/apachesolr_search/what%20is%20ABA