

Choosing a Provider for ABA Treatment

So you've explored your treatment options and decided that Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the right treatment for your child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) — congratulations! While this is a positive step forward, you may be feeling overwhelmed by how to choose the best provider for your family's needs. When interviewing an ABA agency, consider these factors:

Does the agency share your values?

Services should always focus on your family's priorities and fit into your lifestyle.

ABA teaches skills that are important for everyday life. The plan developed for your child should focus on teaching skills that you value (e.g., participating in family events, getting along with siblings, staying in bed at night) and that can be used now and in the future.

ABA providers should create learning environments where children are happy, relaxed, feel safe and are engaged. Treatment should be enjoyable for your child, not coercive.

What kind of outcomes does the agency aim to achieve with your child?

Be wary of unrealistic promises.

ABA requires a lot of work by a lot of people (particularly parents/guardians like you) to help your child reach his or her potential. Don't expect treatment success from the agency alone.

Ask if they use evidence-based practices. ABA isn't forever — how do they determine when to discharge and how will they prepare your family for it? Ensure that there is a transition plan to move your child from therapy into natural settings (e.g., school, community).

How do they plan to prepare for adulthood (living arrangements, education, employment, relationships)?

Where are the services provided?

Consider where your child could benefit most and which therapy environment your child's benefits cover.

Home-based treatment occurs in a natural setting and allows for improved interactions with siblings and increased caregiver involvement.

Center-based treatment can increase the ability to interact with others and provides an opportunity for your child to interact in small or large groups, as well as one-on-one.

Community-based services provide opportunities to increase skill development in an alternative natural environment, potentially with other neurotypical children to practice social skills.

How will the agency involve your family in treatment?

Caregiver participation in treatment improves progress.

Learn how caregivers are involved in selecting treatment goals and how they structure caregiver training and feedback.

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In addition to formal caregiver training sessions, are parents able to view therapy sessions?
Learn how often progress updates will be given.

Don't be afraid to speak out about what is best for you and your child. Ensure the provider is speaking in accessible language that you understand and that the behavioral principles being used are explained clearly.

How will the agency work with your child's other treatment providers?

Each professional who works with your child has important information to share.

Pediatricians, behavior analysts, teachers, etc. each see a different aspect of your child's progress. Your ABA provider should be aware of each perspective.

Coordination of care ensures that your child gets the right care by making sure that each provider has access to all available information. This can eliminate delays, confusion, mistakes and wasted time.

How will the agency keep your child safe?

Ensure that they prioritize your child's safety.

Confirm that a background check has been done on each employee who will interact with your child and that they adhere to the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts.

Observe how the therapist responds to your child and don't hesitate to question them.

What kind of training do staff have in working with behaviors like aggression or self-injury?
Ask your provider questions about their policies in case of a concern or grievance.

Is the agency able to begin treatment immediately?

There is often a wait list to receive ABA services.

How long is the wait between assessment and treatment?

Do they have registered behavior technicians (RBT) available to begin treating your child right away?

If there is a wait list, which resources or services can the agency recommend in the meantime?

What are the billing practices?

ABA is often an intensive treatment and can have high costs for families, sometimes leading to sticker shock.

How much is required payment for treatment (including copays and other costs) and how often will you be billed? Ask specific questions to fit your family's financial needs.

More expensive programs or providers don't necessarily provide better services. Be sure to make an educated decision based on all of the factors discussed in this tip sheet.

#AutismChampions

If you think you or your child may have autism, visit Lucet's Autism Resource Center ([LucetHealth.com/autism-resource-center](https://www.LucetHealth.com/autism-resource-center)) for helpful information about obtaining a diagnosis and treatment.