

# LURIE CENTER



MASSACHUSETTS  
GENERAL HOSPITAL



MassGeneral Hospital  
*for Children*<sup>™</sup>

## My doctor recommended ABA , now what?

### What is ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a therapy based on the science of learning and behavior. ABA helps us understand:

- How behavior works
- How behavior is affected by the environment
- How learning takes places.

ABA therapy applies our understanding of how behavior works to real situations. The goal is to increase behaviors that are helpful and decrease behaviors that are harmful or affect learning.

ABA therapy programs can help:

- Increase language and communication skills
- Improve attention, focus, social skills, memory, and academics
- Decrease problem behaviors.

ABA is effective for people of all ages. It can be used from early childhood through adulthood.

### What is the evidence that ABA works?

ABA is considered an evidence-based best practice treatment by the US Surgeon General and by the American Psychological Association.

“Evidence based” means that ABA has passed scientific tests of its usefulness, quality, and effectiveness. ABA therapy includes many different techniques. All of these techniques focus on antecedents (what happens before a behavior occurs) and on consequences (what happens after the behavior).

More than 20 studies have established that intensive and long-term therapy using ABA principles improves outcomes for many but not all children with autism. Therapists have used ABA to help children with autism and related developmental disorders since the 1960s.

## How do I find an ABA therapist?

The Lurie Center recommends these steps to find ABA services:

- Call your insurance company to obtain a list of in-network providers.
- Contact your local **Autism Support Center** for guidance (<https://ne-arc.org/services/autism-and-specialty-aba-services/autism-support-center/>).
- Visit **Mass Behavioral Health Access (MBHA)** to find ABA specialists: <https://www.mabhaccess.com>.
- Utilize the **Insurance Resource Center for Autism and Behavioral Health** list of ABA providers on their website: <https://massairc.org/>.

To find an ABA Early Intervention Specialist (for children under age 3 only):

- A list of approved ABA providers can be found on the Massachusetts Early Intervention Training website by going to [Early Intervention \(EI\) Autism Spectrum Disorder Specialty Services | Mass.gov](#) and then downloading the [Early Intervention Autism Provider Directory](#).
- You must first be assigned an Early Intervention Service Coordinator who will complete the referral for children under age 3.

## What questions should I ask?

Once you identify potential ABA therapists, ask important questions to see if the therapist is a good fit:

- What type of *insurance* do you accept? What are the fees?
- What is your *appointment availability* (e.g., after school, weekends, weekly)?
- Are you providing *virtual appointments*? Will you be resuming in person?
- What does a *typical ABA session* look like?
- Do you offer *home-based or clinic-based* services?
- How do you *determine goals* for my child?
- How do you *involve parents* in the treatment?
- Are you *open to collaborating* with other team members (e.g., school, psychiatrist, group home, parents)?
- *How do you typically collaborate* with a treatment team?

## Resources for this FAQ and other information on ABA

- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/applied-behavior-analysis>
- [www.asatonline.org/for-parents/learn-more-about-specific-treatments/applied-behavior-analysis-aba/](http://www.asatonline.org/for-parents/learn-more-about-specific-treatments/applied-behavior-analysis-aba/)