BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER
The Autism Program

Accessing & Troubleshooting ABA Services

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What is ABA therapy?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) helps families improve the behaviors of their learner under 21 years old with Autism Spectrum Disorder. It is tailored to individual needs.

A **Licensed Applied Behavior Analyst (LABA)** & **Behavioral Technician (BT)** work closely with the family to help them develop a therapeutic behavior plan.

Flyer Purpose

To offer some strategies to **troubleshoot common challenges** you may encounter such as when services are disrupted or do not meet your learner's needs.

Understanding the Current State of ABA

- ABA services can be challenging to access and maintain
- Families may experience barriers, such as long waitlists, staffing shortages, language barriers, and service consistency issues
- Not every ABA agency will be the right fit or provide the right level of support for your learner
- Availability depends on your location, insurance coverage, and the family's availability to consistently engage with services



FAQs & Next Steps:

1. What if my learner has been on a long waitlist?

- Join multiple waitlists with different agencies + check in frequently with agencies to confirm waitlist status
- To search for additional agencies that you can connect with, utilize helpful search engines:
  - www.MABHAccess.com
  - www.DisabilityInfo.org
- Consider **Intensive Home-Based Services** (IHBS) (refer to table below for more information)
  *Note: Insurance does **NOT** cover both IHBS and ABA at the same time

	ABA	IHBS
What is it?	Helps improve behaviors of learner with autism & behavior plan building.	Less intensive than ABA, providing less 1:1 intervention & more family-centered approach.
Who provides?	A Licensed Applied Behavioral Analyst (LABA) works with a behavior technician.	Team of providers.
Who can receive it?	Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnosis, under age of 21.	Youth with challenging behaviors that impact daily function, under age of 21.
Where does it occur?	In home, community, or center-based.	In home and community settings.

FAQs & Next Steps:

2. Why is there so much staff turnover? What can I do about this?

Unfortunately, turnover is common in ABA due to workforce shortages. You can share your concerns with a board certified behavior analyst (BCBA) or clinical director, and ask for support if turnover is affecting your care consistency and quality. A possible benefit from this is that it can help with generalizing learned skills.

Who is who? It's important to know who is part of your care team. The table below explains key members.

Behavior Technician (BT)	Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)	Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)/ Licensed Applied Behavior Analyst (LABA)
High school level (or equivalent)	**High school level** (or equivalent)	**Graduate level** (Masters or higher)
Not registered with BACB (Behavior Analyst Certification Board)	**Registered with BACB**	**Licensed by the Allied Mental Health Professions Licensing Board** (in MA)
Works under supervision of RBT/BCBA/LABA	Works under supervision of BCBA/LABA	Provides caregiver training and supervision of RBTs and BTs
Typically entry level position	More direct training & oversight, higher level of credentials than BT	Conducts assessments, oversees programming and implementation quality, and makes clinical decisions

Make sure that you have a clear idea of who is involved in your learner's care. If you are unsure, reach out to the agency directly and ask for a list. You should have access to their contact information (email or phone) so that you are able to communicate any changes in plan, questions, and/or concerns.

3. What if my behavioral technician (BT) or BCBA/LABA is not a good fit?

Clearly explain your concerns & expectations and ask questions to understand the agency's programming and the individual support plan. Caregivers can be involved with the planning process by addressing goals and strategies. You may also consider finding a new agency - but keep in mind that switching to a new BT/agency can lead to gaps in services due to long delays and waitlists. **Many issues can often improve with additional training, supervision, or disciplinary action,** rather than full change.

Issue with BT	Issue with BCBA/LABA
↓	↓
Contact BCBA (supervisor), or clinical director (if no BCBA)	Contact clinical director, or agency lead

FAQs & Next Steps:

4. What if my learner is not getting enough hours or my BCBA/BT fails to show?

The first step is to check if the lack of hours is a matter of insurance approval or agency availability.

Not enough hours covered by **insurance**:	**Agency** not providing full covered hours:
• Directly contact your insurance company. Explain that additional hours are medically necessary, and ask what the next steps are to request more. • Talk to your learner's medical provider or Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrician to discuss the need for additional hours.	• Notify BCBA, clinical director, or agency immediately and follow up consistently. • Request make-up hours, ask if another BT can cover missed sessions. • Keep a record of missed sessions or lateness.



5. How do I apply for transportation to and from the ABA center?

- **PT-1:** medical transportation services approved by insurance. Ask you learner's primary care provider to request PT-1 services to and from the ABA center.
  - In some cases, **caregivers may be required to accompany** the transportation. Service availability may also vary with each transportation agency.
- **School Bus:** Some schools may offer school bus transportation if the ABA center is within the same school district and sessions are held after school. Speak with your learner's school district, ABA agency, or medical care team to explore options/eligibility.

6. What if my learner's BT/BCBA doesn't speak my language?

Make sure to **clearly communicate your preferred language** during the intake process. This will help the agency look for a bilingual staff. Depending on the language, limited bilingual staff availability may increase wait times and require you to look into other agencies if staff is ultimately unavailable. Even if a bilingual BT is not available, the agency or your insurance may be able to offer **interpreter services** for parent education sessions and meetings with the BCBA.



7. When should an ABA provider or agency be reported?

- **Only BCBAs and RBTs** are regulated by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), and any official concerns should be reported directly to the board.
  - **Unregistered BTs are not governed by the BACB** and should be reported to the police if there are concerns of unethical practice.

- **BACB website explains:** (https://www.bacb.com/ethics-information/reporting-to-ethics-department/)
  - What situations should be reported
  - How to submit a concern
- Reach out to your medical provider or the agency for support around making a report.

