



My Autism Ally

ABA Provider Questions with Explanations

Make sure you fully understand your insurance coverage and the costs that you will be expected to cover before beginning any program.

Always tour any clinic to which you're considering sending your loved one. Do not take "No" for an answer. Even during the COVID pandemic, clinics figured out ways for families to tour their facilities in some capacity.

Feel free to ask other families about potential centers in Facebook groups and other social media, but be aware that a private message may get you better answers. All ABA clinics have staff in these groups and will comment how wonderful their clinic is. Also remember that everyone's experience is different, instead you are looking for trends or similar comments.

Do not remove your child from school or any other programming until the facility gives you a start date. Unfortunately, some clinics have been known to say that they "have a spot opening soon" and soon is 6-9 months or even longer. This is usually a tactic to keep families from looking elsewhere for services.

Keep in mind that ABA therapy is a behavior program, not an educational program. They may simulate school activities, but academics is not the goal.

If your child is enrolled in a public or private school setting, ask for a meeting/case conference to discuss transitioning from school to ABA programming with both school and ABA representatives at the table. The reverse is also true. If your child is leaving ABA to attend school, have a meeting to discuss the transition and other concerns. A quality center will prompt you to have these meetings and will develop a detailed transition plan.

Be wary of clinics that want to do an initial assessment before having the daily therapy spot available for your child. Every clinic will want to do an assessment, but your insurance coverage limits the number of assessments they will cover per year. This can lead to out-of-pocket costs for you later should you need to choose another ABA provider. In other words, don't commit to an assessment unless you know that the provider is the correct fit for your child and has the daily therapy spot available.

Services

What type of ABA services do you provide? *Is this in-home, in clinic, community outings, or a combination of all? Be sure to be satisfied with answers provided and that it works for your situation.*

Do you offer other services for your clients besides ABA therapy? *There really is no right or wrong answer here. It's about having additional information that helps you find the best fit for you and your family. Be cautious not to choose a provider based solely on convenience.*

What age range do you serve? Can clients age out of your clinic services? *Make sure that this is a good match for your situation. ABA Therapy needs a long period of time to implement and see results. You don't want to be discharged because your child aged out before they were ready.*

What are your hours of operation? *There really is no right or wrong answer here. It's about finding the best fit for your family.*

IF APPLICABLE TO YOU: I would like my child to still attend school for a part of the day. Do you offer part time hours or after school hours? *This can be a good option for children that also benefit from attending school. This can be helpful for maintaining the routine of school and allowing additional opportunities for transference of skills learned in both environments.*

Do you offer parent training? If so, how often and what does it look like? *This answer will vary widely. This is very important if you are wanting training on how to handle your child's behavior in the home and the community settings. Parent training is integral to your child's success in ABA therapy.*

IF APPLICABLE TO YOU: My child has very challenging behaviors. Do you take children on as clients regardless of their behaviors? *Believe it or not, we have had ABA companies tell families that they don't take high behavior clients. Some of these families found this out only after the evaluation, wasting their insurance on a provider that was never going to be a good fit for their child.*

Clinic Background

Where did you come up with the name of the clinic? Why is it meaningful? *Answers here will widely vary. This answer is usually a good insight into what type of provider they are and how they view autism.*

How long has this specific location been open? *Many locations open and then close within two years. A newer location isn't necessarily bad, but you want to understand the longevity of the services they can provide.*

Who owns the company? When did it last change its ownership? Are they privately owned? Corporate owned? Private Equity owned? *Each of these entities will view autism, clients, staff and how ABA Therapy is provided differently. Knowing this will give insight as to the likely experience you will have with the provider. Find the best fit for you and your family.*

Why did you choose this area of the state to start a clinic? *Again, answers will widely vary here. It's just good background information and can possibly help when you are narrowing down your choices between providers.*

Do you have any references or recommendations from families that you can provide? *Again, recommendations will widely vary. It's just more good background information and can possibly help when you are narrowing down your choices between providers. Be wary of testimonials in the company's own materials.*

Behavior Technicians

Many ABA centers train their own Behavior Technicians. Do you?

If so, what does that training look like? If not, who does the training for you?

How long is the training? *Know this: the Registered Behavior Technician credential is generally considered the minimum standard for behavior technicians. What you as a parent are trying to figure out is whether or not the provider is training staff adequately and offering ongoing training for their staff.*

Do you offer continuing training opportunities for your Behavior Technicians? *A quality ABA provider will offer continuing training opportunities for their staff.*

Do you require your Behavior Technicians to become Registered Behavior Technicians/RBT's? *This is considered the minimum standard for behavior technicians.*

How many different Behavior Technicians will work with my child per day? How many per week? *Although working with multiple technicians can be helpful with transference of skills, consistency is also important. Be sure that you are comfortable with the staffing.*

BCBA's

What is a typical caseload for your BCBA's? *Any more than 15 clients may be a red flag that the BCBA may not be able to spend an adequate amount of time with each client.*

How large is the area that each of your BCBA's covers? *This is especially important when you are dealing with in-home ABA. You're trying to determine if a BCBA is driving all over the state trying to provide oversight or whether they have a reasonable size area/number of miles to cover and adequate time to oversee that client load.*

Are the BCBA's providing oversight in-person or via telehealth? *BCBA's are responsible for overseeing the Behavior Technician. Can adequate oversight happen via telehealth? You as a parent need to decide if this is okay for your situation.*

How many BCBA's are working with my child? Will I have a dedicated BCBA that I will be working with as a parent? *Some clinics have their BCBA's alternate or work together as a team. Others assign one BCBA per family. This leads to different communication styles that may or may not work for you and your family. Again, choose what fits your family's needs.*

Insurance

Can you list the insurance companies that you are in network with? *Note in the answer if the provider claims “applied for” versus “currently in-network”. The approval process for some insurance companies can take several months, even years. Be wary of broad answers here like “all of them” or “Medicaid”. Be sure that they take your specific insurance policy or specific Medicaid policy.*

IF APPLICABLE TO YOU: Are you a Medicaid Provider? *A couple of things of note here- Be sure to ask what types of Medicaid they take. Also, Medicaid rates are VERY LOW and most small centers cannot afford to take Medicaid clients. It is even possible that Medicaid clients are dropped when a client with a better reimbursement rate comes along.*

Collaboration and Preparedness

Do you work with any other providers in the area? *Take note of who they list and whether or not you see evidence of the collaboration in their social media or website. Collaboration is a sign of commitment to the community.*

Do you work/collaborate with any other ABA providers? *Again, take note of who they list and whether or not you see evidence of the collaboration in their social media or website. Collaboration is a sign of commitment to the community.*

If we experience another pandemic in which a shut down like March-April 2020 occurs, will you be providing telehealth? Do you have a plan on how to provide services? *This answer is going to vary widely. Be sure you are satisfied with the response and that it is appropriate for your child and family.*