

## **Applied Behaviour Analysis Primer**

### **What is ABA?**

- Applied Behaviour Analysis is a scientific discipline that includes theory (behaviourism), basic research (experimental analysis of behaviour), and applied research and practice (applied behaviour analysis).
- The professional practice of ABA involves the design, implementation, and delivery of interventions, that are derived from the basic principles of behaviour, and have been evaluated in controlled experiments.
- ABA can be useful for people of any age, including those with or without a clinical diagnosis.
- Some areas in which ABA is used include: dementia, intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, acquired brain injury, psychological and psychiatric disorders, education, health and wellness, athletic performance, and organizational behaviour management.
- ABA aims to increase behaviours that are important to the individual, their family, and/or the community, to a meaningful degree.
- As necessary, ABA may be used to reduce behaviours that interfere with skill development and day-to-day functioning.
- ABA programs are directly supervised by Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs or BCBA-Ds) or Psychologists with specialized training in behaviour analysis.
- Individual progress is closely monitored through direct observation, data collection, and analysis.

### **What ABA is NOT**

- A series of procedures or pre-written programs that can be used without training and expert supervision.
- A harmful or punitive treatment.
- A treatment only focused on problems.
- A closed-door therapy.
- A rigid and highly structured treatment.
- A treatment used exclusively for autism.

### **What is IBI?**

- Intensive Behavioural Intervention (also referred to as Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention, or a form of Comprehensive ABA).
- Intensive service delivery (between 20 and 40 hours per week), based on the principles of ABA, that addresses core skills (e.g., communication, imitation, play skills, self-help and daily living skills, social skills, pre-academic), across multiple settings (e.g., home, clinical settings, community, special education classrooms, general classrooms).
- IBI typically involves a 3-tier hierarchy of supervision: an instructor therapist who provides direct therapy, a senior clinician who provides at least weekly supervision, and an experienced BCBA, BCBA-D, or Psychologist with specialized training in ABA, who provides regular and frequent supervision.
- Due to the number of hours and intensity of supervision, the cost is typically between \$40,000-\$80,000 per year.
- Over 30 years of research demonstrates that it is best to deliver IBI to children beginning at 2 to 3 years of age for at least 1 year (sometimes up to 4 years), followed by a carefully planned transition and entry into kindergarten or grade 1 with their peers.
- The goal of IBI is to change children's rate of learning to fundamentally accelerate their development, rather than to simply teach specific skills, which is generally the goal of focused ABA interventions.
- Investing in early intervention can have a significant impact on individuals' functioning over the lifespan.



### **Does every child with autism need IBI?**

- No. Not all children with autism require IBI or a comprehensive ABA program for many hours per week. Many children require far less support, including focused ABA. In focused ABA a small number of skill areas are addressed, or a specific challenging behaviour is targeted; therefore, the number of hours required to achieve desired outcomes is far less than in a comprehensive ABA program.
- Autism is a spectrum, and therefore individualized supports are identified by clinical assessments (there is no “one-size-fits-all” intervention).
- BCBA's and Psychologists with specific expertise working with people with autism can provide recommendations for the clinically indicated amount and type of intervention.

### **What is a BCBA?**

- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), is a certification earned from the international, nonprofit [Behavior Analyst Certification Board, Inc. \(BACB\)®](http://BehaviorAnalystCertificationBoard.com) com.
- BCBA's have a minimum of a Master's degree (in behaviour analysis, education, or psychology), 1500 hours of supervised practice, and pass an exam similar to regulated health professionals. BCBA's with Doctoral degrees are credentialed as BCBA-Ds™).
- Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBA's) have a minimum of a Bachelor's degree, 1000 hours of supervised practice, and pass an exam. BCaBA's are supervised by a BCBA or a BCBA-D.
- RBTs (Registered Behavior Technician) implement interventions under supervision and have a minimum of a high school diploma, complete 40 hours of training, complete a background check, pass a competency assessment and an exam. RBTs practice under the direct supervision of a BCBA or a BCBA-D, and often a BCaBA.
- BCBA's are required to follow a professional and ethical compliance code.
- Behaviour analysts in Ontario work in both publicly and privately funded organizations in clinical education and training, and research roles.
- Currently, behaviour analysts are not regulated in Ontario. For the past two decades, ONTABA has advocated for regulation of behaviour analysis for public protection.

### **What is ONTABA?**

- ONTABA is the largest Canadian not-for-profit professional organization representing behaviour analysis.
- ONTABA's membership is comprised of committed individuals who provide essential behaviour analytic services every day, regulated health professionals, university and college educators, students, parents, and advocates.
- ONTABA's volunteer board of directors have been the elected voice of behaviour analysis for 25 years.
- ONTABA's members, advisors, and volunteers are experts in behaviour analysis and have served on numerous expert and government advisory committees.
- ONTABA's mission is to demonstrate leadership, knowledge, and innovation in education, training, and research for the ethical and effective application of behaviour analysis.
- ONTABA is not a lobby group.