



GUIDE

Selecting an ABA Provider: 5 Essential Considerations

A Guide for Families Seeking Quality
Applied Behavior Analysis Services

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Introduction

Choosing the right Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) provider is one of the most important decisions a family can make when seeking therapeutic services for their child. Quality ABA services can significantly impact a child's progress and development, but not all providers deliver the same level of care and support. This white paper outlines five critical factors that families should evaluate when selecting an ABA provider, ensuring they receive comprehensive, effective, and well-structured services from day one.

1. Immediate Team Availability: BCBAs and RBTs

What to Look For

A provider should have both Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) and Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) readily available when you begin services.

Why it Matters

Many families encounter a frustrating situation where a BCBA conducts the initial assessment, but direct therapy services are delayed because no RBT is available to implement the treatment plan. This gap between assessment and service delivery can significantly hinder progress during critical developmental windows.

Questions to Ask Your Provider

- Do you have RBTs available to begin direct services immediately after the assessment?
- What is your typical timeline from assessment to the start of therapy sessions?
- How do you ensure continuity between assessment and service implementation?

A quality provider maintains adequate staffing levels to ensure seamless transitions from assessment to active treatment, allowing your child to begin benefiting from services without unnecessary delays.



2. Adequate BCBA Oversight & Supervision

What to Look For

BCBA oversight should constitute a minimum of 20% of the total direct therapy hours delivered weekly.

Why it Matters

The BCBA is responsible for developing, monitoring, and adjusting your child's treatment plan. Adequate supervision ensures that the therapy being delivered aligns with the individualized program, that progress is being tracked accurately, and that modifications are made promptly when needed. Insufficient BCBA oversight can result in ineffective therapy, missed opportunities for program refinement, and slower progress.

What This Looks Like in Practice

If your child receives 10 hours of direct ABA therapy per week, the BCBA should provide approximately 2 hours of supervision during that same week. This supervision includes direct observation, data review, staff training, and program modification.

Questions to Ask Your Provider

- What is your supervision model, and what percentage of direct therapy hours does BCBA oversight represent?
- How often will the BCBA observe my child's sessions?
- How does the BCBA communicate with the RBT team about my child's progress?

Consistent, frequent BCBA oversight is a hallmark of quality ABA services and directly correlates with better treatment outcomes.



3. Comprehensive Parent Training and Communication

What to Look For

Regular parent training sessions should be an integral component of your child's ABA program, not an optional add-on.

Why it Matters

ABA therapy is most effective when skills generalize across environments and when parents can reinforce learning in the home setting. Parent training empowers families to understand their child's program, implement strategies consistently, and support skill development throughout daily routines. Regular communication between BCBA's and families ensures that everyone is aligned on goals, progress, and any concerns that arise.

What Comprehensive Parent Training Includes:

- Regular scheduled meetings to review progress and goals
- Training on implementing ABA strategies at home
- Coordination between the BCBA and family regarding program modifications
- Open lines of communication for questions and concerns
- Collaborative goal-setting that reflects family priorities

Questions to Ask Your Provider

- How frequently will parent training occur, and is it included in our service agreement?
- What format does parent training take (in-person, virtual, written materials)?
- How do BCBA's collaborate with families to set meaningful goals?

A provider that prioritizes parent involvement recognizes that families are essential partners in the therapeutic process and that consistent communication is fundamental to success.



4. Qualified and Well-Trained Behavior Therapists

What to Look For

Behavior therapists should have minimum training requirements, demonstrated experience, and strong foundational knowledge of ABA principles before working independently with your child.

Why it Matters

Your child deserves to work with professionals who have already developed competency in ABA techniques, not individuals who are learning on the job at your child's expense. Well-trained RBTs can implement programs with fidelity, recognize when modifications are needed, and create a positive, productive learning environment.

Indicators of Quality Training:

- Completion of the RBT certification process or equivalent credential
- Ongoing professional development and continuing education
- Supervised practice before independent case assignment
- Regular competency assessments and performance reviews
- Strong understanding of reinforcement, prompting, data collection, and behavior management

Questions to Ask Your Provider:

- What are your minimum qualifications for behavior therapists?
- What training do RBTs receive before they begin working with clients?
- How do you ensure RBTs maintain high-quality implementation of programs?
- What ongoing training and support do RBTs receive?

Investing in highly trained staff reflects a provider's commitment to quality and ensures that your child receives consistent, effective therapy from the very beginning.



5. Strong Organizational Structure and Multi-BCBA Support

What to Look For

A well-structured organization with multiple BCBA's on staff, including BCBA's in supervisory roles who provide oversight and mentorship to the clinical team.

Why it Matters

ABA services are complex and require strong organizational infrastructure to ensure quality, consistency, and accountability. A provider with multiple BCBA's benefits from collaborative decision-making, peer consultation, and quality assurance processes. BCBA supervisors ensure that individual BCBA's are adhering to best practices and ethical standards, which protects your family and enhances service quality.

Benefits of Strong Organizational Structure:

- Access to peer consultation for complex cases
- Continuity of care if your primary BCBA is unavailable
- Internal quality control and performance monitoring
- Diverse expertise and specialized knowledge across the team
- Clear escalation pathways for concerns or conflicts

Questions to Ask Your Provider:

- How many BCBA's are on your team, and what are their areas of expertise?
- Is there a clinical director or supervising BCBA who oversees quality assurance?
- What happens if my assigned BCBA leaves the company or is unavailable?
- How does your organization ensure consistency and quality across all clients?

An organization with robust leadership and a collaborative BCBA team demonstrates stability, professionalism, and a commitment to delivering the highest standard of care.



Conclusion

Selecting an ABA provider is a decision that will significantly impact your child's developmental trajectory and your family's overall experience with therapy services. By carefully evaluating providers based on these five essential criteria—immediate team availability, adequate BCBA oversight, comprehensive parent training, qualified behavior therapists, and strong organizational structure—families can make informed decisions that set the foundation for successful outcomes.

Don't hesitate to ask detailed questions during the provider selection process. A quality ABA provider will welcome your inquiries, demonstrate transparency about their practices, and prioritize building a collaborative partnership with your family. Your child deserves nothing less than excellence in their ABA services, and these five factors will help you identify providers who are truly committed to delivering that level of care.



About the Author

Cara Graham, M.A., BCBA, is the Owner and CEO of Graham Behavior Services. As a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, Cara received her Master of Arts degree in Special Education from Kean University and completed her coursework in Applied Behavior Analysis at Caldwell University. Cara's professional focus centers on providing comprehensive home and community-based services for children and adults with developmental disabilities. Her commitment to advancing industry standards extends beyond her organization. She currently serves as the Chair for the New Jersey Association for Behavior Analysis (NJABA) Business Practices Workgroup, where she advocates for ethical business practices and quality service delivery across the field, and is also a member of the Professional Advisory Committee for the New Jersey chapter of the National Council on Severe Autism.

This white paper reflects Cara's dedication to empowering families with the knowledge they need to identify high-quality ABA providers and ensure their loved ones receive evidence-based, well-structured therapeutic services. The five essential considerations outlined in this document represent the standards Graham Behavior Services upholds and the benchmarks Cara believes all families deserve when selecting an ABA provider.



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