The Role and Importance of ABA in Early Childhood Intervention

How It Works
Landon

- 19 months old
- Outcome: I want Landon to say words so that he can communicate with mom and dad saying, “mama”, “dada”, “all done”, “bye”, “more”, etc.
Gracie

• 31 months
• Outcome #1: I want Gracie to sit and play for a longer period of time, starting at two minutes and then long enough to hear a story.
• Outcome #2: I want Gracie to play with toys rather than put them in her mouth.
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Jennifer Caffee, EIS

• 13 years experience with Autism Spectrum Disorders
• Training: Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Discrete Trial Teaching
• 2008 ECI of LifePath Systems
• Professional Expert, Sand Diego Unified School District
Jennifer Caffee, EIS

• 2002 Case supervisor for a home based program focusing on ABA and discrete trial principles
• 1997 Dallas MHMR Behavior Specialist, implemented in-home ABA through UNT
Brooke Janacek, MaEd, EIS

• 14 years experience with Autism Spectrum Disorders
• 2005-Current Supervisor with ECI of LifePath Systems
• 2001 Early Intervention Specialist with ECI of LifePath Systems
• 2000 Worked with family in-home ABA program
What is Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)?

• Data-based strategy for teaching children with intellectual disabilities
• Only treatment for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders approved by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration)
• ABA identifies behaviors/skills to be extinguished or reinforced, how to identify what is reinforcing and how to provide reinforcement
Seven Dimensions of ABA

1. Applied: Interventions focus on changing socially significant behavior
2. Behavioral: Behavior is measurable
3. Analytic: Objective demonstrations that the procedures caused the effect
4. Technological: Interventions are described so they can be implemented by anyone with training and resources
Seven Dimensions of ABA continued

5. Conceptually systematic: Interventions are specific and identifiable

6. Effective: Interventions produce strong, significant change

7. Generality: Interventions, from the beginning are intended to operate in different environments and continue after formal treatment has ended
Steps in the Process

1. Increase
2. Discuss
3. Refer
Option 1: Structured visits with ABA principles

- Focus is on teaching caregiver when and how to reinforce behavior
- Specific examples of prompting child
- Provide behavior modification strategies and family goals
- Data collection to monitor effectiveness of intervention
• 24 months
• Outcome #1: I want Jack to respond to his name that way I know he is paying attention along with watching where I point such as “There’s a dog.”
• Outcome #2: I want Jack to be able to ask for a particular food or say he wants to eat or sleep. He will be able to ask for up, outside, and milk
Jack continued…

• Outcome #3: I want Jack to follow directions like “throw it in the trash”, “go get…”, “bring me…”, and “show me…”

• Outcome #4: I want Jack to play appropriately with toys rather than putting them in his mouth and licking them.

• Outcome #5: I want Jack to walk on flat feet rather than on his toes.
Option 2: Systematic Program Development

- All aspects of Option 1
- Increase home visit hours
- Evaluation: Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS)
- Follows discrete trial training methodology
- Data collection on specific targeted skills
- Family goals for generalization
ABLLS-R

The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills

Scoring Instructions and BLP Development Guide

Joan Clarkson, Ph.D., ICAN

Behavior Analysts, Inc.
• Outcome #1: I want Cohen to play with toys the way they are intended to be played so that he will color on paper rather than shred it, roll train around the track rather than pull the track apart, and attempt to swing bat and hit ball off the tee, and engage in pretend play consistently.
Cohen continued…

- Outcome #2: I want Cohen to use words to request his needs and wants and to label objects so that he begins to communicate verbally.
What is discrete trial training/teaching (DTT)?

- One-to-one instructional approach used to teach skills in a planned, controlled, and systematic manner
- Used when a learner needs to learn a skill in small, repeated steps
- Each trial has a definite beginning and end
How does DTT work?

- Tasks are broken down into short and simple trials
- Motivation for learner is built by rewarding performance of desired behavior or completing of task by tangible or external reinforcers
How does DTT work?

• Stimuli presented in DTT is clear and relatively consistent. Learner is only rewarded for performance of desired behavior under the specified stimuli.

• DTT teaches skill/behaviors explicitly (cause-effect learning).

• Instructions are simple, concrete, and only provide the most salient information.
Parental Teaching Component

- Transition after ECI is part of the plan when ABA is being considered.
  -- ECI can train volunteers in the principles
  -- ECI trains family on instruction and data collection to become the expert to continue home program
- Consider the ability and personal preference of the family involved in intervention
Parent Comments

- Once ABA started, she has improved so much more
- I am able to use ABA within my daily routines
- ABA strategies have helped me teach my child
- The therapists have graciously helped teach me strategies to adapt into our daily routines
- We have received ABA on a weekly basis. He is requesting things daily learned many new skills
IDEA Part C

A statewide system described in sec. 633 shall include, at a minimum, the following components:

Statute: Title I/C/635/a/2

(2) A State policy that is in effect and that ensures that appropriate early intervention services based on scientifically based research, to the extent practicable, are available to all infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families...
20.2 Service Delivery Accommodations

The contractor must design early intervention services to accommodate the family by

- allowing variable degrees of family involvement, as determined by the family
- not denying services based on the family’s decision about their level of involvement.
Texas ECI Handbook

- Services can be provided in different ways, depending on how your child may benefit most
- Your child’s need for any service can range from less than an hour to several hours per week
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Where do we start

Autism Team
- Consists of a staff person from each discipline
- Hire or contract with a BCBA to develop programs
- Regular meetings to establish procedures, training opportunities, share information

BCBA and LCSW
- BCBA develops the program
- Designated staff members based on interest level to provide the ABA services
- Autism training is focused on these people
Who will teach me?
Support Groups, Conferences, Parents, Practice
Research-based Methodology

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- The Mind Institute
- The American Academy of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
- National Institute of Mental Health
- Autism Speaks
- US Surgeon General
- Rethink Autism
Common Texas Resources for Training

- Autismspot.com
- Texas State Conference on Autism
- www.woodallkids.org
- www.fhautism.com
- www.autism-society.org
- www.focussped.com