

Series 1 - How to Start A Home Based ABA/VB program?

A Parents Manual

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1. Overview

1.1. Applied Behavior Analysis

Applied Behavior Analysis is a science of human behavior. It began with the work of Dr. BF Skinner 70 years ago. In 1938, Skinner published *The Behavior of Organisms*, which described operant conditioning, the process by which learning occurs as the result of selection by consequences of behavior. Skinner also discussed how antecedent stimuli, when correlated with the function altering effects of consequences, also alter future occurrences of that behavior. This is known as a three-term contingency (A-B-C). A-B-C is the basic unit of analysis of behavior, and was the first description of the discrete trial. Later applications of this science to education and to other matters of socially significant behavior, by behavior analysts led to what is now known as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA).

1.2. Applied Behavior Analysis/Verbal Behavior (ABA/VB)

In 1957, Skinner published *Verbal Behavior* that elaborated the functional analysis of behavior. In his text he extended operant conditioning to verbal behavior in order to fully describe the series of human behaviors. He described several components of language as ‘verbal *operants*’ or functional units of language. This abstract model of language classification was seldom found in educational intervention programs until recently. Many applied behavior analysts including Mark Sundberg, Jim Partington, Vince Carbone, and Jack Michael have conducted and published research on verbal behavior. *Applied Verbal Behavior* is the application of the science of behavior analysis to teaching ‘Verbal Behavior’, binding it to motivational variables. ABA/VB addresses difficulties in the area of communication observed in individuals with developmental disorders like autism. Behavior analysts have developed teaching strategies that demands creativity and flexibility to a higher degree in order to proceed with the student’s motivational variables. ABA/VB has brought about dramatic results for many people with these disorders.

2. What is an ABA/VB In-Home Program?

Parents establish an intensive in- home ABA/VB program in order to meet their child’s/children’s unique needs that may include motor, linguistic, social, emotional and other academic skills. The purpose of the home program can be either (1) to supplement school programs to meet child’s goals or (2) to act as a stand-alone program that meets child’s goals.

An in-home ABA/VB program has to be run conjointly by the:

1. **A Consultant** who assesses a child’s needs, designs and monitors the curriculum of the home program

2. **Parents** who provide input on child's needs, implement and fund and manage the home program
3. **Therapists** who provide the direct instruction to the child helping to implement the home program jointly with the parent and the consultant.

In-Home programs are managed by parents. Parents can either receive consultant and therapist services from an agency or hire an independent private consultant and private therapists.

3. Why is it important to start an In- home ABA/VB program?

Teaching language to children with severe disability can be challenging to families and professionals. A thorough evaluation should be done prior to setting up the goals. A significant component that leads to a successful program is to have skilled instructors who can accommodate the requisite flexibility and creativity while targeting the skills listed in the developed curriculum following the student's motivational variables. It is advised that individual programs are monitored consistently by a board certified behavior consultant.

It is important to start an in-home program if your school system does not have a model that looks very close to this..

- This model will have a qualified ABA/VB consultant who is a certified behavior analyst or some one who is pursuing his/her certification and is supervised by a lead BCBA experienced in program design for individuals with autism.

- -The ABA/VB consultant will monitor your child's individual program closely and will participate in the IEP meetings for setting up goals. She/he will provide training to the child's teachers, IAs, therapists and all the other parties involved.

- An IEP will be written to teach all of the functional units of language following the strategies developed by lead behavior analysts (BCBAs)

-Placement should guarantee one on one instruction for certain goals and group instruction for certain other goals. The IEP should specify the percentage of time for one on one instruction for ITT and NET and group instruction.

-The school system will make sure that your child's teachers, counselors, speech, occupational, and behavior therapists are trained during summer vacation and they will be acquainted with your child's goals and needs in order to transition into the new school year with no regression but with a continuation of current acquisition rates.

- Data will be taken consistently and will be reviewed by the consultant and the information will be shared with parents.

The ultimate goal of an in-home program is to groom the child to eventually be included in a typical peer school program and thence it is only a temporary arrangement till the child is able to learn in a more typical setting. For children whose needs are not met in a school setting, parents might just be left with one viable option, homeschooling, to provide their child with an education and a future.

4. Learning ABA/VB concepts

Parents usually have a good understanding of their child's unique needs – needs such as problem behaviors, learning difficulties, and skill deficits. It is important for parents to understand ABA/VB in order to help effectively address those needs. Parents should be active partners with the consultant and therapists in identifying and reaching the short and long term goals of the ABA/VB program.. “*Teaching Language to Children with Autism or Other Developmental Disabilities*” by James Partington and Mark Sundberg is a recommended book to read. It is highly recommended that parents attend ABA/VB related workshops that are conducted in the area. Refer to the Suggested Resources section (section 8) at the end of this document for more information.

5. Setting up the Home Program

A typical home program has:

- 1 - Consultant
- 1 - Lead Therapist
- 1 to 4 - Therapists depending on number of hours defined by the consultant (or afforded by the parents)

These are the key steps in setting up the home program

1. Hiring consultant/private agency
2. Assessing child's needs
3. Designing the child's program
4. Hiring therapists
5. Training therapists
6. Implementing the program (includes periodic updates by the consultant, regular therapist team meetings to ensure teaching consistency and troubleshoot existing acquisition problems)

5.1. Step 1(a) Choosing and Hiring a Consultant

It is recommended that a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) be hired as your consultant if possible. If not, expect your consultant to have a masters and/or a doctoral degree in psychology or related subjects with similar credentials (or equivalent years of hands-on experience). He/she should be under the supervision of a lead behavior consultant or an analyst and should be aware of all the research updates in behavior analysis field. Please check out The Behavior Analyst

Certification Board. Inc site (www.bacb.com) for a list of Certified Behavior Analysts. Parents should speak with other parents about their experiences with the consultant. Keep in mind that consultants may have more experience with children of a certain functioning level (early, intermediate, or advanced learners). A recommendation from another parent with a child of the same functioning level is more valuable.

A consultant is usually expected to have had work experience with a wide range of children. This would include early to advanced learners and mild to severe behavioral issues. He/she should be able to evaluate your child and develop a curriculum. This might be similar in format to the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) developed by school systems. A consultant should review data and videos of sessions sent by parents and should provide feedback on this material. Some parents request that consultants provide written summary notes after a consultation session in order to have a better understanding of the consultation. The best consultants tend to be very responsive to parent and therapist input and concerns. List of possible consultants has been provided in Appendix A

5.2. Step 1(b) Hiring Private Agency providing ABA/VB services

Most private agencies providing ABA/VB services will have a board certified behavior consultant and therapists. These providers will be responsible for providing training, supervision for their therapists (A list of these available providers in the area are included in Appendix A). Their therapist service charges will include all these training expenditures.

What if the providers have a long waitlist and you need to start a program ASAP?

Parents will be able to ask the provider for a supervisor or a lead therapist. If the provider is able to staff a senior therapist/supervisor, parents can hire other therapists privately.

If the provider has a consultant available, but not therapists at the moment, parents will have to take the consultancy services from them hiring their own private therapists.

If the providers in the area are not accepting new clients, parents will need to approach other long distance consultants. Parents will need to find their own private therapists.

5.3. Step 2 Assessing Child's Needs

Consultants will generally use multiple tools to assess a child's skills. A common tool for assessment in ABA/VB programs is the Assessment for Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS). Parents can purchase this tool from

- The Complete ABLLS Kit by VB Teaching Tools available at [VB Teaching Tools](#).
- An updated version of the ABLLS is also available but has not been adopted by consultants yet. You can find the updated version of the ABLLS at www.behavioranalyst.com

Parents will be generally asked to complete an ABLLS chart so that the consultant can make decisions regarding the program.

5.4. Step 3 Designing the Program

Based on the needs of the child and parent objectives, a consultant will design a program that has the following outputs:

1. a list of target skills to teach
2. techniques on how to teach each target skill
3. materials needed to teach
4. designing therapy space to teach
5. probe sheets for data collection
6. graphs for data analysis
7. number of hours of therapy

5.5. Step 4 Hiring Therapists

As mentioned earlier, you may be able to find therapists from your local providers. If this is not feasible, you will have to hire psychology or special Ed undergraduate or graduate students from the local universities.

Management of a team involves a significant amount of work and coordination efforts. Every program will require a significant amount of parental involvement.

The best therapists enjoy working with children and are creative, playful, and flexible. They should also be dedicated to learning ABA/VB, should fully understand the goals of the program, and should have the ability to motivate the child to learn and progress. This last attribute is very important as a VB program is driven by the child's motivational variables. Therapists should be available for communication regarding the program and the child's behavioral issues with other team members, parents and the consultant

Approach the local universities in order to place your ads for therapists in the psychology and special Ed departments. Tips about hiring therapists have been provided in Appendix B. Parents can receive permission from the authorities and do presentations in the classrooms, elaborating the program, in order to give the students

a better perspective of what you are expecting. You may also work with the internship coordinator and create internship programs through your in-home programs.

Refer to Appendix C for a list of interview questions for therapists

Parents being therapists: This option can work for some families. There are financial benefits to this approach that can make an ABA program possible. This approach can be difficult and exhausting job for some parents even though it might be your greatest desire to be a teacher for your child. It is important to maintain consistency through out the day while you maintain your role as a parent and a therapist. If you decide to be your child's therapist, make sure you get necessary training. You should still have a consultant to review your data, records and monitor the program.

Being a therapist for your child ensures that you have a detailed knowledge of his/her current targets and behavior problems and has the potential to make his in therapy and out of therapy interactions more consistent.

Lead therapist: One of your most experienced therapists will be the lead therapist on your team. She serves as a mentor to other therapists and primary liaison to the consultant. Refer to Appendix D for responsibilities of the lead therapist.

5.6. Step 5 Training Therapists

The consultant for the team that includes therapists and parents will conduct initial workshop/training. Parents should make sure that therapists receive adequate training before they start working one- on- one with the child. The training might include an overview presentation of the program by the trainer, pairing (building positive rapport with the child), hands on training by the trainer that includes instructional control, errorless teaching, teaching and generalizing in the NET, data taking and a lot more depends on the child's program . Parents should also look for ABA/VB workshops being conducted in the area and consider sponsoring the therapists for these workshops. Families usually share these training costs where therapists work for multiple families.

A primary resource for workshops on ABA/VB is www.poac-nova.org. Refer to Appendix E for other training resources.

5.7. Step 6 Implementing the Program

Organizing to implement a home program is one of the key responsibilities that can fall on the parent. Appendix E has a list of web sites where you can find a lot of the materials needed for home programs.

Here are some the essential parts of organizing and implementing the home program:

Therapy Space: One room in your house should be set up to conduct the therapy program. The room should have a table and two chairs for intensive teaching routines and shelves for arranging the materials.

Reinforcers, toys, and games, cards: Parents should make child's reinforcers, toys, games and cards and other essentials available for therapy sessions.

Program book, data sheets: A program book should be maintained in order to organize data sheets, therapist notes, therapist time etc.

Managing documents: Documentation is very significant in an ABA/VB program and hence it is indispensable to keep it organized. Digital data is usually easier to manage, update, and disseminate. Consultants, teachers, and therapists should all be able to see and learn from the data generated by the program.

Scheduling team meetings and consultation sessions: Holding therapist team meetings will be very helpful to maintain consistency across all the therapists.

Co-coordinating consultant visits to school: It is advised that parents arrange for their private consultant to visit the child's classroom and make recommendations. That will help ensure that teaching methods and curriculum choices in both environments are in synch and can work in harmony. Setting up similar goals for home and school and having all the therapists and the special Ed teachers at school on the same page will bring beneficial effects to the child's learning.

Motivating therapists: Being a therapist is truly an effortful job, physically, mentally and emotionally. Therapists are the heart and soul of the program. While this is their profession, most of them do their job with true loving devotion, the definitions of which no one has ever established. It is a parent's job to make sure that they are motivated. Here are some tips on how to motivate them.

- Reward your therapist with constant raises and allowances
- Let them hear oftentimes how well they work and provide them praise and encouragement.
- Listen to their ideas during team meetings, and encourage them to overlap sessions with others in order to brainstorm and work on your child's needs.
- Sponsor them for outside training sessions if affordable
- Be flexible with their sickness and make up sessions

5.8. Step 7 Monitoring and updating the Program

It is required to hold bi- monthly or tri- monthly follow-up meetings with the consultant and the team. The objective of these meetings is to discuss problems with implementation of the program and developing remedies. These meetings are also an opportunity to discuss new targets and strategies to move the program forward. Data analysis information should be reviewed to determine if progress is occurring in the child and what additional objectives need to be put into place for the child.

6. Funding the program

It is crucial for parents to know how to finance their child's this program and hence a matter to deliberate closely. Parents usually fund the program by themselves. In particular, Fairfax County Public Schools does not fund home ABA programs. Some parents receive funding from the school district, private insurance companies or through medical waiver program. It is important to have an idea about the therapists and consultant rates before estimating the costs.

Therapist Salary: Therapist salaries vary depending upon the, geographic area, the number of years of experience the training they have received, and the demand in a market for skilled therapists. Rates are anywhere from \$12 – 35 per hour for privately hired therapists and \$45-55 per hour for therapists provided by agencies.

Consultant expenses: Consultant expenses can vary depending on the consultant's experience and whether or not they are local or long distance. The fee ranges from \$75 to \$175 per hour. A long distance consultant's other expenses will also include hotel, airfare, car rental, gas, per diem, charges for reviewing data video etc.

Material cost: *It may vary dependent on the program. Home made materials work just as well as the very expensive pre-packaged ABA materials.*

VB programs can cost anything from \$15,000 to \$80,000 depending on # of therapy sessions, # of therapists, therapist fee, the consultant fee and the other expenses.

Taxation: It is recommended that parents consult their tax advisors for details on taxation.

7. How long do you do an in-home program?

It is helpful to know how long we need to run an in-home program. Alas, it varies exceedingly by child and his/her unique needs. That is why it is extremely important to closely watch and maintain the quality of your home program.

8. Suggested Resources

Books, Videos

- ❖ Teaching Language to Children with Autism Or Other Developmental Disabilities by Drs. Mark Sundberg and James Partington available at [Behavior Analysts, Inc.](#) and [Different Roads to Learning](#).
- ❖ Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills by Drs. Mark Sundberg and James Partington available at [Behavior Analysts, Inc.](#) and [Different Roads to Learning](#).
- ❖ Teaching Verbal Behavior: An Introduction to Parents Teaching Language by Dr. James Partington available at [Behavior Analysts, Inc.](#) and [Different Roads to Learning](#).
- ❖ A Collection of Reprints on Verbal Behavior by Drs. Mark Sundberg and Jack Michael available at [Behavior Analysts, Inc.](#)
- ❖ [Carbone CD Seminar Set by Dr. Vincent J. Carbone.](#)
- ❖ [“Getting Started” and “Teaching the Tact” DVDs](#)
- ❖ "The History of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Verbal Behavior" Presented by Dr. Vincent J. Carbone available at [POAC](#)
- ❖ The Complete ABLLS Kit by VB Teaching Tools available at [VB Teaching Tools](#).
- ❖ [Journal of applied behavior analysis](#)
- ❖ [Updated Version of ABLLS](#)
- ❖ [Analysis of Verbal Behavior](#)
(http://www.abainternational.org/journals/analysis_verbal_behavior.asp)

List Servers

[DDT NET yahoo group](#)

[VB yahoo group](#)

Other useful websites

[Verbal Behavior Network](#) (A very informative site)

[Autism society of America Northern VA chapter](#)

[Association for Behavior Analysis](#)

[Information on Joint Control](#)

Appendix A - Providers, Trainers and Consultants

Vincent J. Carbone, Ed.D., BCBA

Email: suzkuh@aol.com

Phone:(845) 323-3961 - Fax:(845) 624-0434

Mail:P.O. Box 715 - Valley Cottage, NY 10989

Web <http://www.carboneclinic.com>

Establishing Operations. Inc.

Holly Kibbe and Cherish Twiggs

E-mail: info@establishingoperationsinc.com

Web: <http://www.establishingoperationsinc.com>

Christina Burk

Toll Free Voicemail/Fax: 1 (866) 538-2575

PO Box 1123

Bronx, NY 10471

Dower and Associates, Inc.

Serving Loudoun and Prince William Counties, VA

Nikia Dower, MS, CCC-SLP/L, BCBA

703-618-2272 (business cellular)

703-330-0554 (office - Prince William County)

E-mail: SLPTUTOR@aol.com

Web: <http://www.dowerandassociates.com>

ICAN of Washington, Inc.

Bethesda, MD

Cynthia Onder, MA, CCC-SLP/L, BCBA

301-897-0815 (office) 301-897-0819 (fax)

E-mail: icanofwashington@hotmail.com

Kid's Communicating, LLC

Buckeystown, MD

Jennifer Bobbitt, MA, CCC-SLP/L, BCBA

301-502-0213 (cellular)

E-mail: speechpathjen@verizon.net

Behavioral Directions, LLC

Jane Barbin, Ph.D., BCBA
Stacey McIntyre, M.A., BCBA
464 Herndon Parkway, Suite 216
Herndon, Virginia 20170
Voice (703) 855-4032
Fax (571) 333-0292
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Michelle L. Hurst, M.ED., BCBA

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108 Elden Street Suite 11
Herndon, VA 20170
Office phone: 703-689-0019
Fax: 703-689-0039
Web: <http://www.AutismOutreach.com>
Email: MichelleHurstAO@aol.com

Accelerated Learning LLC

Matt Bowman
8630-M Guilford Road, PMB #335
Columbia, MD 21046
443-745-5240
E-mail: matthewdbowman@aol.com

Appendix B Advertising for therapist positions

1. Sample Ad for Therapists

Here is a sample ad.....

Seeking People to work with a Child with Autism

Position: ABA/VB Therapist

Hours: # of hours/per day/week

Location: <Your Location>

We are seeking people(preferably psychology majors) to join our intensive home based Applied Behavior Analysis program with an emphasis in Verbal Behavior (developed based upon the researches of Dr. BF Skinner) for our autistic child.

The program: A brief explanation of your program (Optional)

Training: Initial training will be provided followed by tri monthly full day training sessions by our BCBA's (mention any other training offered)

Rate: We offer a competitive salary per hour based on previous experience with periodic raise and training.

Please contact <your name> at <contacts> if you are interested in this position..

2. Universities where ads can be placed

[George Mason University](#)

[Marymount University](#)

[Georgetown University](#)

[George Washington University](#)

[American University](#)

[NOVA community colleges](#)

[Argosy University](#)

3. Suggested websites for placing therapist ads

1. www.abaconnections.com
2. [ABA Connections Yahoogroup](#)
3. [ABA job connections yahoo group](#)
4. [Craigs List](#)
5. [ABAjobconnectionsVAyahoo group](#)
6. [ASANV yahoo group](#)
7. [P2P- Autism yahoo group](#)
8. [Fairfax autism Network yahoo group](#)

Appendix C Interview Questions for Therapists

An experienced therapist...

- Have you had any training in ABA/VB? If so, by whom?
- What is your experience in this field? (# of years worked, # of kids worked with, their functionality levels, socialization training done, evaluation done, training done for new therapists etc.)
- How often do you attend workshops? How often do you check updates?
- What books have you read or recommend on ABA/VB?
- How many families have you worked for? If you are not currently working with them, what prompted you to quit?
- If you have worked with many families, what is your average tenure at a job?
- How do you handle negative behaviors?
- Do you have experience taking data?
- Do you have any experience working on direct instruction programs? (Some kids will be on this program)
- How do you feel about working with a consultant?
- What do you want to do ultimately with all the experience you gain from this program?
- Are you available to train our new therapists (If you are interviewing a lead therapist)

A person who is new to ABA/VB....

- What is your experience with children with autism or other disabilities in general?
- What motivates you to consider this job?
- What different courses have you taken so far? (If this is a student)
- Have you ever done any research projects that involves data taking?
- Are you willing to learn (explain that this job is very different from other jobs and requisites lots of learning and practicing)?
- How well do you work with other people in the team?
- Are you open to constructive criticism (from a consultant and/or lead therapist)?
- Are you available for scheduled training sessions and overlapping sessions with other therapists?
- What are your hobbies (good to know to get an idea whether the person will be able to motivate your child)?
- Your future plans or what do you want to do with the experience you gain from this program?

Common questions and your policies....

- What is your commitment? (Explain that a new therapist will have to go through lots of training before he/she actually starts working with the child one on one. Parents will also be sponsoring therapists for outside workshops/training that are costly. A therapist should be well paired with the child before placing

demands on him/her. It is important that a therapist stays for X # of months or X # of years for full involvement and for the amelioration of the program).
Advice not to accept this offer if he/she cannot stay for a longer period.

- Set up parameters on sick time (both therapist and the child), vacations, and explain your policies on cancellations, making up sessions, maintaining consistency etc.
- Discuss their availability for therapy sessions, team meetings, consults etc.
- Be specific on
 - Payment or hourly rate (rates for training, respite and weekend rates if they are different from the regular rates) and any other allowances you are willing to provide.
 - Who pays them (If you receive funding from a source, explain how it works)
 - How often payments are made?
 - Explain to them if parents are willing to write an agreement with the therapist
 - Discuss if the therapist has to go through a back ground check
- Do you have any medical conditions that we should be aware of?
- Request for resume and references.

Appendix D Responsibilities of Lead therapist

- Training the new therapists at home
- Training teachers, instructional assistants at school (They may be asked to shadow your child at school)
- Classroom observation
- Meeting with the school ABA coach
- Attend IEP meetings at school
- Communicate with the teachers to write correlated goals, review data from school
- Help parents to hold and manage team meetings, consultation sessions
- Write up summary notes for the team
- Help parents to put together data, graph etc.
- Evaluation, Updating ABLLS
- Holding social groups
- Identifying the immediate needs and set up goals if needed

Appendix E Training Resources

<http://www.establishingoperationsinc.com/workshops.html>

<http://www.carboneclinic.com/>

www.behaviorchange.com (Introductory workshops)

www.behavioranalysts.com

<http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/Autism/> (annual week long autism conference at Penn State)

Appendix F Teaching Materials

www.vbteachingtools.com

[Different Roads to learning](#)

[Super Duper Publications](#)

[ABC School Supply](#)

[Kaplan Company](#)

[ABA-Materials](#)

[ABA Educational Resources](#)

[Direct Instruction Programs](#)