



**MOBILE BAY ABA
AUTISM CENTER**

Parent Handbook

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WELCOME

Welcome to Mobile Bay ABA Autism Center (“Mobile Bay ABA”). We are delighted that you have chosen the Mobile Bay ABA community. The information in this handbook will assist you in gaining an understanding of our program and expectations.

OUR MISSION

Our Mission is to provide the highest quality and most effective Applied Behavior Analysis therapy using a whole child approach to individuals of all ages and developmental levels diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. We believe every child deserves to reach their full potential, and will work with parents/guardians, schools and other therapists (speech therapist, physical therapist, or occupational therapist) to ensure the highest level and continuity of care. We are passionate about providing these services to all children no matter their ability and are committed to achieving the greatest degree of independence possible for every child.

WHAT IS ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis (“ABA”) is a scientific, evidence-based discipline that strives to understand and improve socially significant behaviors. ABA examines the interactions between people & their environment to determine the effects the environment has on a person’s behavior (the “why” a behavior occurs). Behavior Analysts systematically assess an individual’s behavior, develop objective goals and a reliable measurement system to monitor progress. At Mobile Bay ABA, ABA is used to teach new skills, improve performance across multiple areas, and decrease unwanted and challenging behaviors.

What do we focus on in ABA Therapy?

- A. Teach new skills, such as communicating wants and needs, social skills, play skills, self-help, and independent living skills.
- B. Generalize skills across environments (e.g., from ABA center to home, school and community)
- C. Replace unwanted behavior with socially appropriate behavior (e.g., hitting, self-injury, property destruction, tantrum).

CENTER SCHEDULE

Hours of Operation:

Our center is open from 8am to 5:30pm, Monday through Friday. Drop-off and pick-up times are based on which program your child is enrolled. It is important that you strictly adhere to your child's drop-off and pick-up times. Please refer to Mobile Bay ABA's "Cancellation/Late Policy" for our policies on tardiness to either your child's scheduled drop-off or pick-up.

Your child should be at the center no later than 5 minutes prior to his/her scheduled start time.

Holidays:

Our center is closed for certain holidays. A schedule will be provided annually in January.

Scheduling of Services:

ABA Therapy with Mobile Bay ABA may involve a large numbers of service hours. We ask families to work with us on scheduling service times so that your child may receive a consistent level of services. Once we have committed to a schedule with your family, we do our best to maintain the appointments on consistent days and times. We ask that you do the same. We cannot change schedules week-to-week or month-to-month.

We strive to make available times for service during our regular hours of operation which accommodate your child's previously arranged schedule. However, this is not always possible for several reasons, including the number and length of your child's other commitments, your child's ability to be alert and participate in intervention during times when he/she is available, and our ABA therapists' pre-existing obligations.

It is your right to refuse offered services for any reason, including when they conflict with other obligations or you do not believe your child will be alert for intervention. We will do our best to schedule times that work for your child. However, if you refuse appointment times, we cannot guarantee we will have alternate times available. You are welcome to request placement on a waitlist for preferred appointment times.

REQUIREMENTS FOR TREATMENT

Mobile Bay ABA has the ability to support a variety of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) treatments. The manner in which we support your family varies based upon your wants and needs. Our current list of entry requirements are listed below:

Mobile Bay ABA Autism Center:

Families must meet one of the two criteria below for acceptance:

1. Families (a) have a child between the ages of 2-18, with (b) a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and (c) has insurance coverage for ABA Therapy through Blue Cross Blue Shield.
2. Families (a) have a child at any age and (b) wish to pay for center-based ABA Therapy privately.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Insurance Coverage:

Mobile Bay ABA and its providers are currently contracted through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama (BCBS). We will work with you and your insurance provider to get proper authorizations in order to deliver services. We will bill contracted insurance providers for services rendered (subject to applicable deductibles and copays).

Private Pay:

Mobile Bay ABA accepts individuals not covered by the aforementioned insurance providers on a self-pay basis and alternative fee schedule. Where applicable, we may assist in preparing the necessary documentation in order for you to file for reimbursement through your insurance provider. We also encourage you to seek alternative funding via available grants that may assist in paying for therapy. There is a list of grants available on the websites for Autism Speaks and the Autism Society of Alabama's.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Generally:

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is an outcome-based practice focused on making timely progress toward specific goals. All parents/guardians are expected to take an active role in setting and achieving the goals. Providers will share treatment goals, progress, training and strategies so that you can support achieving the desired outcomes in your home and community with your child. Your commitment to your child's ABA therapy program is critical to achieving successful results.

Depending on the treatment goals, providers may request certain program materials and supplies for your child's program. Parents/guardians are expected to fulfill these requests within a timely manner. Please label all belongings provided.

Please communicate with us prior to your child's session if you would like to participate and if you'd like to schedule a teaching session with your child and ABA therapist.

Many of the goals are written with generalization criteria that require children to be able to demonstrate skills with parents or guardians. We do this because research has shown that parent involvement facilitates generalization of skills across environments and results in the best outcomes for children. In order to demonstrate generalization, it is recommended that a parent/guardian actively participate in a session on occasion.

Personal Items to Provide

For each day/session, please provide the following items in your child's backpack:

Full Day 8:00-3:00	AM Only 8:00-11:00	PM Only 12:00-3:00	After School 3:30-5:30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra pair of clothes• Diapers or pull-ups (if appropriate)• Lunch• Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra pair of clothes• Diapers or pull-ups (if appropriate)• Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra pair of clothes• Diapers or pull-ups (if appropriate)• Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra pair of clothes• Diapers or pull-ups (if appropriate)

PICK-UP POLICY

Only people indicated as Authorized Persons by the child's parent/guardian may pick-up the child from Mobile Bay ABA at the end of a day/session. Please complete our Authorized Person Form to provide for all Authorized Persons. You are responsible for providing notice in writing of any changes, including additions or removals of Authorized Persons. Please note we will ask for identification should you list someone who we have not met before.

CANCELLATION AND LATE POLICY

Mobile Bay ABA requires a minimum of 24-hours notice to cancel a session. The 24-hour policy does not include **excused absences**. Excused absences shall be determined in the sole discretion of Mobile Bay ABA and include, but are not limited to sickness, emergencies or extenuating circumstances. In these circumstances, please call us at 251-287-2442. Mobile Bay ABA reserves the right to require verification of excused absences.

In order to best provide services, Mobile Bay ABA adheres to the following fee schedules for our cancellation and late policy:

Situation	Fee
No Call - No Show: <i>Any session that does not start within 10 minutes of scheduled time and family has not contacted Mobile Bay ABA prior to scheduled time.</i>	\$100
Cancellation: <i>Any session that is cancelled with less than 24 hours notice.</i>	\$50
Late Drop-Off: <i>Family has informed Mobile Bay ABA that child will be present but more than 10 minutes after session start time. After 10 minutes, cancellation charge applies.</i>	10+ mins: \$50
Late Pick-Up: <i>Family picks up child 5 or more minutes after scheduled session end time.</i>	5+mins: \$50

*Fees may be waived in extenuating circumstance (at Mobile Bay ABA's sole discretion).

No Call-No Show Policy

We pride ourselves on effective communication and ask that parents participate in this process. Please make every effort to notify us if you are running late to your child's session, at 251-287-2442. We reserve an ABA therapist to work with your child and if we have not been contacted by you about a cancellation or late drop-off the ABA therapist may no longer be available. One no call-no show may result in termination of services.

Cancellation Policy

Our Health Policy contained herein outlines instances when your child's session should be cancelled due to illness. Additionally, if your ABA therapist arrives at the session and determines that your child is too sick to actively participate, the session will be canceled. Cancellations due to client illness made by the ABA therapists at the session are considered a Cancellation subject to the above fee and will not be made up.

In situations where a family has cancelled their child's appointment 3 or more times in a month, we will call a meeting and need to consider rescheduling appointment times. In extreme circumstances, we may need to consider terminating services do to your insurance provider's policies.

If we cancel, except where your child is ill, we will make every effort to make-up the cancelled session. We will do our best to alert you in a timely fashion as to any cancellations on our part. We do not guarantee a substitute session for the day the appointment is canceled. We do not make up sessions that fall on holidays or which occur on legal holidays.

Please note: if your child misses (or changes schedule for any other reason) for more than two consecutive weeks, we will be unable to guarantee your session times.

Late Drop-off Policy

Please notify Mobile Bay ABA at 251-287-2442 as soon as possible if you know you are going to be dropping your child off late. We reserve your ABA therapist to work with your child. Sessions that begin late due to delays on the part of the family cannot be extended or rescheduled as we cannot guarantee ABA therapist availability at other times. In situations where a family has dropped their child off late 3 or more times in a month, we will call a meeting and need to consider rescheduling appointment times. In extreme circumstances, we may be required to terminate services do to your insurance provider's policies.

Late Pick-up Policy

Please notify Mobile Bay ABA at 251-287-2442 as soon as possible if you know you are going to be late to pick up your child. If you anticipate that you will be more than 15 minutes late, it is recommended that you make alternate arrangements for a timely pick up.

At 5 minutes late to pick-up, the provider will call parent/guardian to assess the situation. If no contact is made by 15 minutes after scheduled pick-up, the provider will attempt to contact those listed on the emergency contact list. If we are unable to confirm an authorized pick-up within 1 hour after pick-up time, the appropriate authorities will be contacted so they can further investigate the circumstances.

MEDICAL AND HEALTH

Health Policy

In order to ensure a healthy environment for clients, families, and staff, session should be cancelled if any of the following symptoms are observed:

- Fever of 100 degrees or more
- Chronic cough
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat/strep throat
- Discharge from the eye/pink eye
- Unusual spots or rashes/chickenpox, impetigo, ringworm, hand foot and mouth
- Lethargy
- Excessive green mucus from the nose
- Vomiting
- Head lice
- Any other contagious conditions

If your child displays any of the above symptoms during a therapy session, we will contact you immediately. Parents are responsible for arranging pick-up within 1 hour. If parent cannot be reached right away, persons from the emergency contact list will be called.

Please notify Mobile Bay ABA at 251-287-2442 of any contagious illnesses so we take accurate and prompt action.

Returning to session will be based on the following criteria:

- Symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication
- For illness requiring antibiotics: 24 hours after start of treatment
- A doctor's note ensuring illness is no longer contagious may be required at directors discretion

Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency, Mobile Bay ABA will contact Emergency Medical Services (911) as well as the child's family. If recommended by EMS personnel, the child will be transported to the closest appropriate facility by ambulance.

Medication Administration: Only emergency medication will be administered with proper documentation and training. In the event that emergency medication must be used, EMS will be contacted and then parent. Examples of emergency medication are inhalers for children with Asthma and EPI pens for children with severe allergies.

Food/Other Allergies: Parent/guardian must provide proper documentation and medication for any life-threatening allergies.

Emergency Guidelines

Building protocols will be followed in the event of an emergency evacuation. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible regarding center closure. As a rule of thumb, in the case of an emergency, if public schools in the area of service are closed, it is assumed that session is also cancelled. For example, in the event of a weather emergency that closes public schools in the area the center will also be closed unless we notify you otherwise.

TERMINATION OF SERVICES

Termination of Services by Mobile Bay ABA:

Mobile Bay ABA may terminate services when:

- (i) it becomes reasonably clear that your child no longer needs the service, is not likely to benefit from further services, or may be harmed by continued service.
- (ii) in our sole judgement, anyone at Mobile Bay ABA (including guests) are threatened or otherwise endangered by your child, or another person with whom your child has a relationship.
- (iii) when you do not pay fees charged or when insurance denies coverage for treatment. In such cases, appropriate referrals may be offered to you. All fees are due and payable 30 days from the date of invoice.

Termination of Services by Parent/Guardian:

You may discontinue services at anytime. Mobile Bay ABA will work with your family to make a referral to another provider if requested. Where possible, we request a courtesy two-week notice in writing so that Mobile Bay ABA may provide for a smooth transition.

Non-discrimination

Mobile Bay ABA enrolls individuals on a case-by-case basis with emphasis upon the best interest of the individual and the ability of the providers and facilities available. Mobile Bay ABA does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, gender, age, or disability, in the administration of its enrollment, program, or policies.

GRIEVANCES AND COMMUNICATION**Contacting the Therapy Team**

We at Mobile Bay ABA are very dedicated to the families we serve, however we ask that you respect after-work hours and privacy. Please do not call or text BCBA's unless absolutely necessary, and please do not attempt to communicate directly with ABA therapists outside of working hours. All communication regarding your child's scheduled therapy sessions, cancellations and otherwise, should be directed to administration at 251-287-2442 or emailed to info@mobilebayaba.com

Grievances

Mobile Bay ABA is committed to providing the highest quality services to all families. We are very happy to be working with you and your child and look forward to an ongoing collaborative environment. Should you have any general concerns or questions, please feel free to contact us at 251-287-2442 or info@mobilebayaba.com.

In the event that you are dissatisfied with any service provided, you are encouraged to communicate your concerns in such a way that the problems may be appropriately resolved. We encourage families to communicate openly and informally with their child's BCBA, our Director, Dr. Joshua Levine, or Vice President, Roni Bramlett with any specific questions or concerns. Please do not discuss your concerns with ABA Therapy staff.

Any problems with your child's individualized program/goals should be directed to Dr. Joshua Levine or your child's BCBA.

Although informal resolutions are encouraged, Mobile Bay ABA recognizes that there may be problems that require formal consideration and resolution. In such event, Mobile Bay ABA will work with you, as appropriate, to formally resolve the issue.

The above grievance procedure should be used to address problematic concerns including human rights. Allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation or misappropriation of participant funds should be reported directly and immediately to Dr. Joshua Levine and Roni Bramlett.

AT ANY TIME DURING THIS PROCESS YOU MAY CONTACT YOUR FUNDING SOURCE REPRESENTATIVE OR ANY OTHER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION FOR ASSISTANCE.

No form of retaliation shall occur, nor shall any barrier to service be created, as a result of a family grievance. All documentation regarding the grievance will be filed in the client's case record.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What services do you offer?

Mobile Bay ABA uses Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) as an instructional method to teach individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ABA is an evidenced-based, data-driven approach that has become widely accepted as an effective treatment for helping individuals with ASD (ref. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). ABA has a proven, successful track record of developing language in non-verbal children, improving academic performance, strengthening executive functioning, increasing independence, acquiring and expanding social skills, and reducing anxiety and aggression with long-term outcomes and effects that can generalize across people and environments (ref. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14).

1. Direct Instruction:

The power of the Direct Instruction (DI) model rests on several essential teaching components.⁶ First, DI focuses on teaching towards generalization while providing as much rapid-paced instruction as possible. Second, DI is ABA therapist-directed and ensures highly structured programs that are designed for individualized attention and small-groups. Lastly, DI uses reinforcement-based approaches to learning to ensure pre-requisite skills are being met and maintained throughout the learning process.

2. Natural Environment Teaching

This method uses reinforcers found in the natural environment to teach new skills to a child. Under this loosely structured method, a child learns new communication skills outside of a highly structured and discrete learning opportunity. More importantly, instruction is led by the child's motivation, rather than an exclusively ABA therapist-selected set of materials as the basis for providing reinforcement.

3. Discrete Trial Training

During a traditional discrete trial training session, a child and ABA therapist would sit facing each other to minimize distractions and facilitate attending behaviors. For example, if the goal is for the child to say, "truck" while looking at a truck, the teacher would say "truck" while holding up a picture of a truck. Once the child says, "truck", a reinforcer is delivered. Through repetition, and fading, the child eventually says truck in the presence of a picture of the truck, without prompts from the ABA therapist.

4. Pivotal Response Training

This method is based upon ABA principles which emphasizes the importance of motivation and natural reinforcers in the generalization of skills. The main components of Pivotal Response Training (PRT) include using a child's motivation to teach multiple cues, self-management, and self-initiations. According to PRT, these components are the foundational skills upon which learners with ASD can make widespread and generalized improvements in many areas of their life.

5. Shaping

This method is embedded within every teaching opportunity and uses preferred items to successively reinforce behavior to a target response. Shaping is

commonly used with kids diagnosed with ASD to start basic communication.

6. Errorless Learning

Errorless learning is a technique where the child is prompted to make the appropriate response immediately to ensure a correct answer each learning opportunity. That prompt is then slowly faded to promote accuracy with the least amount of error and frustration.

7. Functional Communication Training

Functional communication focuses on teaching alternative communication to replace problem behavior. For example, it may be determined a child is hitting other children to get their attention. One of the functional communication strategies would be to replace the hitting with the words, “hello”, followed by a reinforcer. In this fashion, the child eventually learns to say, “hello” rather than hit others.

In addition to using an evidence-based, data driven approach to learning (ABA), Mobile Bay ABA incorporates curricula that have a track record of (a) providing a useful assessment (e.g., starting point) for teaching skills, and (b) clearly outline a progression of skills that helps a learner achieve a peer-age repertoire. These evidence-based curricula include, but are not limited to:

1. The Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (The VB-MAPP).

The VB-MAPP is an evidence based assessment tool, curriculum guide, and skill tracking system that is designed for children with autism who demonstrate language delays (Sundberg, M. L., 2008).

2. The Assessment of Basic Learning and Language Skills Revised (ABLLS-R)

The ABLLS-R is an evidence based assessment tool, curriculum guide, and skills-tracking system used to help guide the instruction of language and critical learner skills for children with autism or other developmental disabilities (Partington, J.W., 2006).

3. Skillstreaming (social skills curriculum)

Skillstreaming is an evidence-based prosocial skills training program that consists of an assessment tool, curriculum guide, and skill tracking system and is designed for early childhood through adolescence (Goldstein, A.P. & McGinnis, E., 2001).

4. Essentials for Living

The Essential for Living is an evidence based functional skills curriculum and assessment, skill tracking instrument for children and adults with moderate to severe disabilities or limited skill repertoires (McGreevy, P. A., 2012).

5. Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS)

The AFLS is an evidence based assessment tool, curriculum guide, and skills-tracking system used to help guide the instruction of functional living skills. The AFLS is comprised of the following modules: Basic Living Skills, Home Skills, Community Participation Skills, School Skills, Independent Living Skills,

and Vocational Skills (Partington, J. W., 2012).

Mobile Bay ABA maintains our emphasis on providing a developmentally appropriate curriculum that addresses the core deficit areas of ASD. The focus on intervention may include language, social interaction, joint attention and imitation skill development, and employ age-appropriate activities and materials. Primary treatment models for older children include ABA and PRT, which are empirically supported interventions for individuals with ASD with a wide range of severity and cognitive capacity (McGee et. al, 1999; National Standards Project, 2009). Your child's individualized treatment program has been designed and implemented with his/her individual abilities, needs, cognitive level and learning style in mind, integrating several treatment methodologies – all of which are empirically demonstrated to be effective for a child with a profile similar to your child's.

What should a session look like?

Mobile Bay ABA sessions are designed to be conducted one-to-one (1:1), with one line ABA therapist and one child and, at times, in group. Sessions are guided by lesson plans that have been developed specifically for your child based on his or her treatment goals. Lesson plans are guidelines for ABA therapists about how particular goals will be achieved during various activities. Periodically throughout the session the ABA therapist will give your child a break (engagement in a self-directed, productive activity). During this time your ABA therapist will take data and organize additional teaching materials.

In the last 5 minutes of a session, our ABA therapists will take the time to answer questions you might have and discuss with you how the session went. At the end of every session you will be provided a form that outlines your child's day. The form may also contain information about what was done that day and what you might work on outside of therapy sessions. Should you have any questions or concerns about the content of these forms, please feel free to contact the supervising BCBA for your child's case.

Who will be involved in my child's session?

Mobile Bay ABA involves one Board Certified Behavior Analyst and one ABA therapist in your child's session.

Do you videotape my child?

We frequently take video recordings of therapy sessions. We review the videos and are happy to share the videos with you upon request. The primary use of these videos is for training, so that we can provide the best possible therapy for your child. Video is reviewed between our BCBA and the clinical team as a way to enhance supervision, collaboration, and treatment. A critical part of this training includes showing video segments of parents, ABA therapists, and children engaged in the program. These images illustrate developmental levels and therapeutic techniques and help demonstrate how to work with the broad array of children with ASD. With your consent we may also use in our social media platforms (facebook, website).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT RECEIPT OF PARENT HANDBOOK

By signing below, I am acknowledging that I have been provided with a copy of Mobile Bay ABA's Parent Handbook.

Name of Child (please print): _____

Name of Parent/Guardian (please print): _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Date: _____

