



# Home ABA Insurance Program Parent and Caregiver Handbook

## *Mission statement*

*At Helping Hands ABA, we firmly believe that every person has the right to live a happy, successful life.*

*Everyone grows and learns at different paces, and we believe in fully supporting each person to meet and overcome any challenge.*

*Our primary goal is to lend our helping hands to assist both individuals with disabilities and the caregivers who love and support them.*

*We want to see people with disabilities learn new skills, gain independence, and live full and wonderful lives.*

*We want their families to feel empowered, supported, respected, and appreciated throughout their unique journey.*

*We believe that progress depends on our full commitment, and we give no less than our best to make a positive difference in the lives of the people we serve.*

## Welcome to our Helping Hands ABA Home-Based Insurance Program

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

At Helping Hands ABA, we believe that each child has unique needs and goals that are best met when family and staff members build strong partnerships. Children make sustained progress only when parents, caregivers, and therapists work together as a team, and we feel honored and humbled to be a part of your child's team. As a parent or primary caregiver, you are the expert on your child. We understand the importance of combining your expertise and cultural values with the current research and our team's resources to create a proactive, individualized program for your child.

We serve children and families from many cultural backgrounds who speak in a variety of languages. Family and staff members discuss, design, and implement individualized instructional programs for each child. This may include Communication, Socialization/Play, Functional Self-Help skills, and training on the topics relevant to parents and caregivers. Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), a science-based approach to learning, guides our practice. We create and implement individualized programs and monitor our data collection systems to routinely evaluate your child's progress.

Services will be provided by Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) under the supervision and guidance of New York Licensed Behavior Analysts (LBAs). An RBT is a staff member who has undergone specific trainings in ABA as outlined by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board. An LBA is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) who has met the experience, education, and testing requirements of the state of New York for practice as an insurance provider.

The purpose of this information packet is to introduce you to our program. The concerns, needs, and priorities of each family guide this process from referral to discharge. If at any time you have questions about the information covered in this packet, or any other related concerns, please feel free to contact us at (212) 512-0860.

We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

All of your child's team members at Helping Hands ABA

## **What is Applied Behavior Analysis?**

Our instructional program is based upon the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). ABA is a research-based systematic approach to analyzing and changing behavior as it relates to the environment. We look at the unique needs and strengths of each child and gather input from the child's family member(s) and therapist(s) to improve socially significant behaviors that will enhance the quality of life for the child and his/her family.

## **What is an ABA program?**

A program that incorporates the behavior analysis model includes:

- Assessment (routinely gather information about the individual)
- Program (defines specific goals, appropriate evidence-based teaching procedures and data collection systems to measure progress)
- Evaluation (analyzes data to make decisions about program changes, outcomes, integrity, and social validity)

## **How does an ABA program benefit my child?**

Research has shown that children with autism may not readily learn from typical environments, but can learn a great deal given appropriate instruction. Several studies show that comprehensive, intensive behavioral intervention can produce significant improvements in the behavioral repertoire of children with ASD.

Please refer to hand-outs entitled:

1. Becoming an Informed Consumer on Treatments for People with Autism, and
2. Resources & Services for People with Autism and their Family

## **How will ABA affect you?**

By choosing our ABA program, you have chosen to be open to learning more about Applied Behavior Analysis. You have chosen a data driven program that we hope you will partake in. We will provide you with many opportunities to gain further information and apply the concepts. Communication between the family and therapist(s) is essential –both parties should routinely communicate about any questions or concerns. An effective ABA intervention requires consistency on the part of both family members and therapists. Truly understanding and embracing the behavioral principles may not always be easy, nor a quick fix. However with time, you will see that all of the effort involved in the implementation of these learning strategies becomes rewarding as your child displays their ability to successfully learn to reach their potential.

## **Your Child's Program**

Each child has an individualized program that is a planned approach for providing a variety of learning opportunities and monitoring their progress. Prior to designing your child's individualized program, our team will complete a comprehensive review of all documentation, formal assessments (e.g., VB-MAPP, etc.), informal assessments, and direct observation, along with input from parents/caregivers. We use research-based ABA techniques to create a program that builds upon your child's strengths and incorporates your family's values. Your child's individualized program will be monitored routinely and adjusted as appropriate.

Our primary goals in developing a program for your child are safety, independence, and quality of life. A child's program may focus on communication skills, functional skills, behavioral needs, etc. We will teach specific behaviors (e.g., pointing, using language or other means of communication, sitting in a chair while completing a puzzle, playing with a toy, etc.) that have been identified as valuable for your child's behavioral repertoire. At times, we will place demands on your child in order to expand his/her skills. This may be difficult for your child, and perhaps for you, at least initially. While implementing positive teaching strategies, we will be carefully attending to your child's behavior and information such as your child's motivation (e.g., he loves cars) and what reinforces your child (e.g., he says "car" more often to gain access to his favorite red car) to enhance your child's skill set.

### **Teaching Formats**

Some skills or behaviors are taught using a *Discrete Trial Teaching* (DTT) format.

This is an intensive 1:1 teaching interaction used to maximize learning of various skills. DTT involves breaking down skills into small sub-skills and teaching each one intensely. It involves repeated practice with prompting, and subsequent fading of prompts to ensure success. DTT also uses reinforcement (i.e., individualized reward procedures) to help shape and maintain appropriate behaviors and skills.

Conversely, some skills or behaviors are taught using *Natural Environment Teaching* (NET).

Please speak with your child's therapist about the learning strategies being implemented, and be part of your child's team as you see fit.

The last teaching component is parent training. Our staff can provide you with the skills needed to empower you to feel confident in addressing your child's unique behavioral needs when we are not present.

## **What to Expect – Assessment Period**

### **General Outline**

1. Once your insurance company has authorized an initial intake/assessment period, a BCBA will contact you to arrange for home visits and/or phone interviews.

2. During this time, the BCBA will be observing and interacting with your child and with you. S/he is trying to get to know you and the needs/values of your family to develop a treatment plan that will benefit your family to the highest degree. Collaboration is the key to a successful plan.
3. Your BCBA will likely request your child's medical and educational history; this information will be included in your child's intake evaluation and proposed treatment plan.
4. Your BCBA will submit another authorization request for treatment to your insurance company. This will include the plan that you collaborated on and any assessments that were completed. We will wait to hear back from the insurance company.

### **Helpful Information**

Feel free to tell the BCBA what your priorities are for you child/family. Tell us about what is important to you, and what skills you'd like your child to have. Also, let us know if there are any areas in which you'd like to be trained (for example, helping your child complete self-care routines.) Parent training is one of our favorite things to do! It helps our families feel empowered and knowledgeable in evidence-based methods that benefit their children. It also gives your child access to ABA services when we aren't around.

You will be asked to provide your signature on session notes via a platform called *Theralytics*; this is how we document service delivery.

## **What to Expect – Treatment Period**

### **General Outline**

1. Once services are secured, you will be contacted to arrange a service schedule based on your child's treatment plan.
2. RBT and supervisor will come for a visit together. Sessions typically last two hours, but this may vary depending on the needs of your family.
3. Pairing procedure will begin. Specifically, the RBT will engage in preferred activities with your child until rapport with your child is established.
4. Your child's individual programs will be developed and routinely monitored and updated to target specific needs and/or areas for growth.
5. Periodic visits with the supervisor will be scheduled to observe child interactions, analyze and review data, update programs as needed, implement parent training procedures, and train the RBT as needed.
6. Your insurance company approves treatment plans for a specified amount of time (for example, three months or six months). At the end of an authorized treatment period, we will assess your child's skills. Using the results of those assessments, we will either file a continuation of service authorization request if your child would continue to benefit from services, or we would discharge them if they met discharge criteria.

## **Helpful Information**

When the RBT first arrives, s/he will spend some time getting to know your child, specifically by pairing him/herself with your child's favorite activities. During this time, s/he is building rapport, assessing your child's skills, setting expectations, and learning about what motivates your child, all while gradually becoming a preferred person – someone your child will enjoy being around.

You may see our RBTs using technology. We use an online program on a tablet to collect data and write session notes. They have also been instructed to contact their supervisors with questions or concerns during the session.

It is important to note that starting a new program is a change for both you and your child. Each child will react differently to this experience. Some children may adjust easily; others will take longer. Some children may cry or refuse to participate in activities. This is all to be expected. Our staff is trained specifically to guide you and your child through this process. The length of time could vary from a few hours, days, and up to a few weeks. Your child's RBT will work with you to help your child make this transition successful.

If you are not satisfied with the services being provided, you can contact our HR team and [HR@helpinghandsaba.com](mailto:HR@helpinghandsaba.com) to file a complaint. [An HR representative will respond to your complaint within 2 business days and schedule a time to speak with you to discuss the issue and provide solutions.](#)

## **Resources & Services for People with Autism and their Family**

Association for Science in Autism Treatment

<http://www.asatonline.org/>

Association for Behavior Analysis

<http://abainternational.org/>

Autism Speaks

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/>

Autism Society of America

<http://www.autism-society.org/>

Autism Watch

<http://www.autism-watch.org/>

National Autism Association

<http://www.nationalautismassociation.org/>

National Autism Center

<http://www.nationalautismcenter.org/>

Organization for Autism Research (OAR)

<http://www.researchautism.org/>

### **Specific to the New York State**

<http://www.elija.org/>

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

<http://www.nysaba.org/>

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