



201 13th St. #32491  
Oakland, CA 94612

904 W. Riverside #1137  
Spokane, WA 99202

[www.theautismimpactcircle.com](http://www.theautismimpactcircle.com)

## **Initial ABA Assessment FAQs**

### **What is an Initial ABA Assessment?**

When first diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or other developmental disability, or after more than 6 months without ABA therapy, your funding source may require an Initial ABA Assessment to determine if ongoing ABA therapy is medically necessary.

This initial assessment uses interview, observations, record review, and direct testing to gather information about a client, to determine if a recommendation for ongoing care will be made.

Initial assessments provide a snapshot of a client's current functioning and needs. The ongoing Case BCBA will meet with you if and when ongoing care is approved, together you will collaborate on a treatment path that works best for the client and family.

### **Who conducts an Initial ABA Assessment?**

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) or Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) will conduct your assessment.

Your assessor is not necessarily going to be assigned as your ongoing Case BCBA, should ongoing therapy be recommended. To avoid delay in the client accessing needed medical care, we assign assessors based on immediate availability. If possible, your assessor will be assigned as your ongoing Case BCBA. If not, your ongoing Case BCBA will be assigned once ongoing care has been approved.

There are benefits to having a different assessor and ongoing Case BCBA- this allows for two highly-trained and experienced clinicians to review your case, and provide recommendations for care. This allows you to have a better perspective on your child's needs, and the best way to approach those needs.

### **How long does an Initial ABA Assessment take**

We begin and complete assessments within 30 days, contingent on your availability for assessment appointments. Most assessments are completed sooner, given availability is open and flexible.

### **What happens during an Initial ABA Assessment**

Once your assessment is authorized by your funding source, you will be assigned a BCBA assessor by the Intake Team or a senior clinical member. The assessor will reach out to you within 2 business days of assignment, to schedule assessment appointments.

During the assessment- we ask for one initial phone call, and two in-person observations to complete an assessment. Also, you will receive online survey requests to report information that will be used to make recommendations. Expect at least one, but usually two different online survey/questionnaire requests.

Please complete online surveys as quickly as possible, so there are no delays in getting treatment started. If you need help with the assigned survey(s), please contact your assessor.

### **Who is Present During Assessment Appointments**

Most often, parents or guardians attend initial phone meetings, final phone reviews, and complete requested surveys online. However, the client themselves is involved in the process if they are able (e.g. age, functioning level, desire to participate). This is determined by the assessor.

A parent/guardian and the client must be present for all observations. If possible, we request that observations occur across two different environments, the home and a school or other social/community setting. This allows the assessor the best opportunity to learn about the client's current level of functioning.

### **What Happens During Assessment Appointments**

1. **Initial Call:** This is an introductory call with your assessor. During this time, they will describe the assessment process, answer any questions, review your main concerns, request needed records, and schedule remaining assessment appointments. One or both parents/guardians and the client (if appropriate) can join this call.
2. **Direct Observations:** During direct observations, the assessor will observe the client in their natural environment, will spend time taking narrative notes, and if appropriate, may directly test the client (e.g. provide them with an activity and an instruction, then observe). Moreover, the assessor may interview you or the client in depth, review online survey responses, and follow up on any records that were reviewed.
3. **Final Phone Review:** The assessor will provide a brief overview of the findings of the assessment, and answer general questions. You will be provided a final assessment report prior to this call. If and when ongoing treatment begins, your permanent Case BCBA will review the report with you in depth, make needed/requested changes, and determine treatment direction.

### *Treatment Recommendations:*

Your assessor uses assessment results and an evidence-based tool to make treatment intensity recommendations (i.e. number of therapy hours needed, by service level). Recommendations are made across a few different levels or service lines:

- Direct Care- Weekly therapy hours needed to make the most progress, the quickest. This level of care is provided by a technician, who is directly supervised by the BCBA and BCaBA
- Parent/Family Education- Monthly therapy hours used to hold parent/family meetings to discuss treatment progress, review data, and provide training to support interventions used during direct care appointments

- Supervision/Overlaps- Monthly supervision hours used by the BCBA and BCaBA to observe direct care sessions, train technicians, and provide technicians with needed support and direction (used during in-home therapy sessions with the client and technician)
- Ongoing Assessment/Indirect- Monthly hours used by the BCBA and BCaBA in the office, indirectly (without client or family present). This time is used to collaborate with other service providers on your team, analyze data, meet with team members, make treatment planning decisions/changes, and other indirect tasks to support direct care (e.g. lesson plan development, new assessment set up, making visuals and schedules for sessions)

### **What Happens Once an Assessment is Completed?**

Once the assessor submits your final report to our internal team, the assessment report will be submitted to your funding source within 2 business days. Your insurance case manager will review findings and our recommendations, and if recommended, will provide an ongoing treatment authorization. This process typically takes up to 10 business days, depending on your funding source.

### **What Happens Once Ongoing Care is Approved?**

Within 2 business days of approved authorization receipt, your case will be assigned an ongoing Case BCBA and sometimes a Case BCaBA (Associate Behaviorist) who will work under the Case BCBA to support your case. This assignment is communicated to you via email, by a senior clinical member, or a member of our Intake Team. The assigned BCBA and BCaBA will be ccd on this email, and will reach out to you within 2 business days to schedule an initial treatment review meeting.

Once the case is assigned, our Intake Team will contact you via email to obtain your updated availability for ongoing therapy. Using this availability, and feedback from your case supervisors (BCBA and BCaBA), they will assign technicians to work with your child and fulfill the weekly authorized hours.

The more open your availability, the more likely the Intake Team will assign the most appropriate team members, and to the fullest extent of your authorization. We will do our best to maximize your availability, but cannot guarantee that our staff availability will match yours. At times, the Intake Team will contact you about any availability change requests, to maximize your therapy schedule.

### **Understanding the Importance of Maximizing Recommended Treatment Hours**

Decades of research shows that treatment intensity (number of weekly therapy hours with a technician) paired with early intervention make a huge impact on the progress that a client makes in ABA therapy. Like learning a language is easier and more effective when you're younger, acquiring specific foundational skills critical to skill development is easier and more effective in one's earlier years.

To the extent possible, especially with our youngest clients, we recommend that we begin with a more heavy weekly schedule, slowly fading therapy hours as progress is made.

[Research shows](#) that if a child needs a robust program of 20+ hours, but only gets 10 hours, for example, progress is halted and some doors to learning may be forever closed. ABA therapy is

a time and energy consuming process for all, but the rewards are huge! Let us know how we can best support you in maximizing your child's access to therapy.

**More Resources:**

[Sigmund Eldevik<sup>a</sup>, Richard P. Hastings<sup>a</sup>, J. Carl Hughes<sup>a</sup>, Erik Jahrd, Svein Eikeseth<sup>b</sup> & Scott Crosse \(2009\). "Meta-Analysis of Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention for Children With Autism." Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 38, no. 3.](#)

[Rebecca MacDonald, Diana Parry-Cruwys, Sally Dupere, William Ahearn \(December 2014\). "Assessing progress and outcome of early intensive behavioral intervention for toddlers with autism." Research in Developmental Disabilities, 35, no. 12.](#)

*Note: Please see your ABA Consent Packet for more information, or contact your assessor or Case BCBA with questions*