



# *Illinois Association for Behavior Analysis*

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

Behavior analysis is a scientific discipline. It has theoretical, experimental, and applied branches; distinct research methods, scientific journals, textbooks, scholarly and professional organizations, and university training programs; as well as well-established, widely recognized professional practitioner standards and credentials. Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the application of the science to produce meaningful improvements in socially significant behaviors, and the practice of ABA is a profession.

Everyday practices may include (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2014):

- Developing an intervention plan to decrease behaviors such as self injury, aggression, tantrums or increase behaviors such as academic work, physical abilities and language.
- Training interventionists (behavior technicians and caregivers) to carry out selected aspects of protocols with the client in everyday settings. The behavior analyst may implement protocols as well.
- Ongoing supervision and monitoring of interventionists.
- Ongoing, frequent direct observation and measurement of target behaviors and review and analysis of graphed data.
- Adjusting protocols and targets based on the data, and training interventionists to implement the revised protocols
- Periodically reviewing progress with the client, caregivers, intervention team, and funders (where applicable).

## **Who provides services?**

A variety of credentials currently exist for ABA service providers, governed by multiple different credentials bodies which have established guidelines for the education and training of ABA service providers as well as ethical codes of conduct. The multitude of credentials available makes it increasingly difficult for consumers to identify qualified and properly trained ABA service providers. There are no regulations in Illinois defining who can (or can not) practice ABA. Funding sources (such as commercial insurance providers or the DHS waiver programs) often specify credentials/licenses required to be considered a qualified service provider; however, this does not provide any protections to consumers who access ABA services outside of these systems.

- Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB; [www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com))- The BACB is the most established credentialing body of behavior analysts, founded in 1998 and accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA).
- Behavior Intervention and Certification Council (BICC; <https://www.behavioralcertification.org/Home/About>)- The BICC, which is also accredited by the NCCA, was established in 2013 to promote consumer protection through the development of a credential with autism-specific competency requirements.
- Qualified Applied Behavior Analysis Credentialing Board (QABA; [www.qababoard.com](http://www.qababoard.com))- The QABA was established in 2012 to provide a mechanism for ensuring paraprofessionals providing ABA services to individuals diagnosed with autism have minimum competency standards and oversight. QABA is accredited by the American National Standards Institute.

Levels of Credentials:

- High school graduate level credentials (not included in licensure bill):
  - BACB *Registered Behavior Technician (RBT)* requires 40 hours of training, passing an observation based competency assessment administered by a BCaBA, BCBA or BCBA-D, and passing an exam
    - 53,793 RBTs in US; 1,720 in IL
  - BICC *Board Certified Autism Technician (BCAT)* requires 40 hours of coursework/training, 15 fieldwork hours working directly with an individual with ASD under the supervision of a BCBA or other appropriate certification recognized by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), licensed psychologist, or other licensed professional acting within the scope of his/her license, and passing an exam
    - 2,682 BCATs in US; 64 in IL
  - QABA *Applied Behavior Analysis Technician (ABAT)* requires 40 hours of coursework/training, 15 fieldwork hours under the supervision of a BCBA or otherwise licensed professional within the scope of ABA and Autism, and passing an exam
    - 312 ABATs in US; 0 in IL
- Bachelor's level credentials:
  - *Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA)* requires an undergraduate degree, 180 hours of approved undergraduate-level coursework, 1000 hours of fieldwork under the supervision of a BCBA, BCBA-D, or licensed psychologist certified by the American Board of Professional Psychology in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology who was tested in Applied Behavior Analysis, and passing a nationally accredited exam
    - 2,641 BCaBAs in US; 27 in IL
  - QABA *Qualified Autism Service Practitioner (QASP)* requires an undergraduate degree, 180 hours of approved undergraduate coursework, 500 hours of fieldwork under the supervision of a BCBA or otherwise licensed professional within the scope of ABA and Autism, and passing an exam
    - 330 QASPs in US; 0 in IL
- Master's level credentials:
  - *Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)* requires a Master's degree in an approved area of study, 270 hours of approved graduate-level coursework, 1500 hours of fieldwork under the supervision of a BCBA, BCBA-D, or licensed psychologist certified by the American Board of Professional Psychology in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology who was tested in Applied Behavior Analysis, and passing a nationally accredited exam
    - 27,280 BCBA in US; 947 in IL
- Doctoral level credentials:
  - *Board Certified Behavior Analyst- Doctoral Level (BCBA-D)* requires a doctoral degree in an approved area of study, 270 hours of approved graduate-level coursework, 1500 hours of fieldwork under the supervision of a BCBA, BCBA-D, or licensed psychologist certified by the American Board of Professional Psychology in Behavioral and Cognitive Psychology who was tested in Applied Behavior Analysis, conducting behavior analytic research, and passing a nationally accredited exam
    - 2,045 BCBA-Ds in US; 44 in IL

## Who do we service?

We service any individuals in need of behavior change but are most commonly known for working with children and adults with autism, developmental disabilities, and/or behavior disorders. In IL, common settings to employ a Behavior Analyst include, but are not limited to: agencies that provide in-home and in-clinic therapy to children, group homes for children and adults, hospitals, therapeutic day schools, and public schools. ABA is not just a theory, a therapy, methodology, or set of techniques. It is not one of many therapies or treatments for autism (Dillenburger & Keenan, 2009) or a one size fits all approach. It is not a fad or eclectic approach to “cure” a diagnosis.

## Why is HB 2710, the Behavior Analyst Licensing Act necessary?

The bill intends to protect and benefit Illinois consumers by setting standards of qualifications, education, training, experience and professional conduct to practice as a licensed Behavior Analyst or licensed Assistant Behavior Analyst in the state of Illinois. ILABA and our supporters are pursuing this legislation to help shield the public from the practice of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) by unqualified persons or persons hoping to commit fraud. Why support **HB 2710**:

- **Consumer protection:** Illinois consumers, like consumers in thirty other states, deserve to know if an ABA service provider meets the required educational, experience, and ethical guidelines for board certification and state licensure.
- **Consumer Demand:** Annual demand for Master's or doctoral level Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA/BCBA-D) has increased approximately 800% from 2010 to 2017. Annual demand for individuals holding Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) certification also increased in the same time period, with the largest increases occurring in the last 4 years (95 postings in 2014 to 1,040 in 2017, a 995% increase).<sup>1</sup>
  - Demand is highest in 5 states: In the past 12 months, over 50% of the job postings for individuals holding BCBA/BCBA-D certification and over 40% of the job postings for individuals holding BCaBA certification were from California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington, and **Illinois**.
- **Mitigate Insurance Fraud:** Illinois mandates private insurance coverage for Autism Spectrum Disorder treatment and the practice of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is specifically defined as a covered service in statute.<sup>2</sup> However, the practitioners of ABA services lack professional recognition which allows fraudulent actors into the market place to prey on vulnerable patients, their families and private/public payors of behavioral intervention services. ILABA has compiled many examples from around the country of the kinds of fraudulent activity we believe our proposal will help mitigate.<sup>3</sup>

Today, there are nearly **1,000** Board Certified Behavior Analysts providing ABA services to Illinois families and their loved ones, school districts, disability treatment facilities and other public or private entities. The passage of **HB 2710** means both increased quality of services for all recipients of ABA services in Illinois and assurance that those services being provided by an appropriately trained and credentialed professional.

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<sup>1</sup> Behavior Analyst Certification Board. (2018). US employment demand for behavior analysts: 2010-2017. Littleton, CO: Author.

<sup>2</sup> SB 934 95<sup>th</sup>; PA 95-1005

<sup>3</sup> [Link to Press clippings detailing Fraudulent Activities](#)