

Proposed Guidelines for Applied Behavior Analysis / Verbal Behavior Service

Delivery:

- Minimum hours of ABA/VB teaching: No less than 15 hours/week for children under 3. No less than 25 hrs/week for children 3 and over. This should not count school hours unless the school program meets the minimum requirements of an ABA/VB program described in the guidelines. Note that the ABA/VB interest group would strongly support ABA/VB in BCPS classrooms, but recognizes that would not be possible in the time frame expected for these guidelines.

Rationale: The MD ATF recommends 15-30 hours (Birth thru age 5). Clearly, a toddler might not even be awake for 30 hours, but by age 3 should be up to 25 hours. The various studies (Lovaas, Howard, etc) indicate that 30 hours is needed, expecting an additional 10 hours from the family. The original Lovaas study had 2 control groups. One received no ABA the other only 10 hours. The group that received 10 hours fared no better than the control that received none. This was validated by a study released this year: [reference 3, S. Eldevik, et al.] The MD ATF quotes the NRC: "Educational services should include a minimum of 25 hours per week, 12 months per year, in which the child is engaged in systematically planned, developmentally appropriate educational activity aimed toward identified objectives."

- One on one teaching by a trained Early Intervention Assistant (EIA) or teacher, under the supervision of a qualified behavior analyst (as describe below)

Rationale: While the MD ATF does not specify a ratio it does cite the NRC which refers to "intensive (one-to-one) services." Maintaining engagement in an "Early Learner" with ASD is difficult to do even with one-on-one instruction. It is clear from the context that this does not mean a Personal Assistant in a regular classroom to deal with disruptive behaviors.

- Training for EIAs should include at least a 1 week workshop and continuing training from the Behavior Analyst (program Supervisor) for the particular child and program.

Rationale: Interventionists in all the recent peer-reviewed studies on the effectiveness of ABA interventions (Howard, Eikeseth, Sallows) were required to levels of training comparable to this standard.

- Family training to allow the child to continue to learn in the home and community is essential for pervasive developmental disabilities like autism. Family training should be similar to that of the EIA with consultation and training with the supervisor on an on-going basis. BCPS currently provides 10 hours per month to train EIAs and family and to introduce new skills and teaching procedures for the student. This typically takes a little more time at the start and to train new EIAs, and less time as the program matures. The current level seems appropriate.

Rationale: Behavioral Intervention must be applied consistently across all settings. This includes the child's acquisition of skills and generalization of those skills to other settings. Generalization is a core deficit of autism.



- A Supervising Behavior Analyst should substantially meet the requirements for a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. We recognize that many very good people are practicing in the field, who meet these guidelines, but are too busy helping children to sit for the exams. Certification alone does not make a good supervisor.

Rationale: The guidelines were drawn from the "Association for Behavior Analysis International", but it should be obvious that a Highly Qualified program supervisor would need sufficient training and practice to apply that training to children with a wide variety of disabilities on the Autism Spectrum. The supervisor needs to be able to provide detailed guidance to therapists and family members for dealing with behaviors, teaching procedures and curriculum content.

- If the Supervisor is not a BCBA, he/she should report to a fully qualified BCBA who is available to review plans, provide guidance where the supervisor lacks training or experience and to help deal with difficult issues.

NOTE: These proposed guidelines were submitted by POAC's predecessor organization to Baltimore County Public Schools for consideration in August 2006.

