



While I am not able to be there in person, I wanted to share my personal experience with ABA and our 19 year old son.

Autism can come with many challenges but the biggest challenges can be the behaviors and social deficits that accompany the diagnosis.

We are grateful for the many hours ABA/BCBA therapists have invested into our son. They are the reason he is still able to live in our home with the rest of our family of 6 and why he has become a productive member of society, holding down a part time job and attending a vocational training program called TACT (Teaching Autistic Community Trade) in the fall. Enjoying access in the community without supports like Karate, swimming, chess tournaments and piano recitals. He also is able to drive his own vehicle which affords him a greater amount of independence. Most importantly he is learning to have meaningful relationships with those around him.

Without the substantial support of the ABA/BCBA therapist I do not know where we would be. Certainly, Noah would not be living with our family. He had constant outbursts, aggression, elopement, posturing, and many other disruptive behaviors.

When we first started intensive ABA therapy in our home almost 7 years ago his behaviors were so explosive that we had a therapist in our home 6 days a week. Monday through Thursday they came for 3 hours, Fridays were 4 hours and Sundays were 6 hours. EVERY WEEK for months. Saturday, we utilized an all-day respite program to give our family a day of rest from the constant onslaught of behaviors from our son.

While it was extremely helpful to have this support in our home we had private insurance fitting the bill for this and many families do not have the benefit of this nor do they qualify for waivers that help pay for behavioral services and even if they do have waivers such as the CES waiver it would not have paid for 22 hours a week of behavioral therapy.

It would have been extremely helpful to have the ABA therapy in the school setting as well. Often the school staff would unintentionally disrupt the work we were seeing at home and so our efforts were frustrated and the process took longer because we needed consistency between home and school and often that isn't happening because of the limited resources that schools have to work with. Often districts have 1 to 2 BCBA's that are stretched to the limits with several schools. They can come up with a plan when the behaviors are significant enough to warrant their attention but then it is up to the school staff, who lack ABA/BCBA training to implement the plan in away that makes a lasting difference for the child both behaviorally and socially.

Often the school lacks the appropriate training and resources and feel ill equipped to meet the needs of the individual child so the child is put in a restrictive environment unnecessarily. When the law clearly states that the child should be in the least restrictive environment possible. When our family personally ran into this issue, we found private agencies were unable to take him because he didn't meet the qualifications of needing a more restrictive environment. Families end up caught in the middle with their child not receiving the appropriate education. The solution is to have each school staffed with highly trained and qualified ABA/BCBA therapist to work directly in real time settings with individual children to ensure their future success.