GEORGIA
BEHAVIOR ASSOCIATES

PARENT/CAREGIVER HANDBOOK

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Departments and Extensions

Department	Ext.
Regional Clinical Liason	602
Director of Training & Development	250
Director of Human Resources	230
Intake Coordinator	221
Reception	200
Lead Case Manager	609

Program Guidelines

Thank you for choosing us to provide ABA services for your child. The following handbook will outline program guidelines and administrative policies and procedures. Please read it thoroughly and keep it handy for future reference. Please sign the last page and return the signed originals to GBA, keeping a copy for yourself.

Mission
GBA is an agency comprised of behavior therapists, Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), and a strong administrative team who work together to provide ABA services for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) throughout Georgia. We specialize in providing intensive, individualized, treatment rooted in the principles of ABA to meet our patients' needs. Our treatment plans focus on teaching skills that will lead to increased opportunities, involvement, and independence while simultaneously decreasing problem behavior and other barriers to learning.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with ASD and their families by providing one-to-one instruction, education, training, guidance, and resources.

Core Values

- Every patient has the right to effective treatment that is rooted in the evidence-based literature of the science of ABA. Treatment must consist of an in-depth assessment to select goals and objectives which target socially significant behavior.
- Every patient has the potential to learn new skills and the right to acquire meaningful repertoires measured by a consistent data collection system and systematic review.
- Every patient has the right to treatment which increases access to reinforcers, opportunities for rewarding personal relationships, well-being, productivity, independence, and community involvement while decreasing barriers to learning.
- Every patient has the right to treatment that is provided within the context of what is legal, ethical, and best practice.
- Parents/caregivers have the right to be involved throughout every facet of the assessment, treatment, transition, and discharge process through effective communication and active participation.
- Every patient has the right to a treatment team of qualified, highly trained professionals.

Our Philosophy

We are a private treatment agency providing data-driven, evidence-based, individualized, one-to-one therapy utilizing the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). All training and therapy are provided or supervised by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA). Our therapists specialize in ABA, Discrete Trial Teaching, Natural Environment Teaching, and Verbal Behavior. We focus on the following areas of development: language, adaptive skills, executive functions, play skills, social skills, and pro-social behavior. Staff is highly qualified with backgrounds ranging from early childhood and special education and all have a passion for helping children with autism as well as understanding and applying behavioral principles.

Statement Regarding Biomedical Interventions for Autism

Science has not yet pinpointed the cause of autism. Over the last decade, the suspected cause of autism has moved away from genetics to an increasing focus on environmental, toxic, autoimmune, and viral agents. Many children with autism also exhibit gastrointestinal, immune, allergic, sensory, motor, and physical conditions which should be treated to improve the overall health of the child. Until such time that the cause of autism is scientifically determined, we do not believe suspected causes, or treatments should be ruled out. We support families' choices to explore biomedical interventions and will work with families and practitioners to support the child.

Ethical standards

GBA adheres to the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts issued by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, as well as all local, state, and federal laws about the provision of services.

Patient Services

GBA provides ABA treatment to individuals diagnosed with ASD who have been referred for ABA services by a physician. ABA is a science that involves the application of the principles of behavior (i.e., reinforcement, motivation, extinction, punishment, stimulus control, conditioned reinforcement, and schedules of reinforcement) to build socially significant behavior and reduce problematic behavior. The field of ABA is well-established with a large supporting body of scientific research and standards for evidence-based practice. Since 1999, ABA treatment for individuals with ASD has been endorsed by the US Surgeon General and the Georgia State Department of Health. In addition, many professional associations have published statements reporting the effectiveness of and endorsing ABA treatment, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics. In addition, the National Autism Standards Report (2009, 2015) has found that treatment rooted in the principles of ABA has the strongest research support as established, effective treatment for individuals with ASD.

Our Process

Our services begin with an intake with a member of our administrative team. At this time, the patient's family can discuss their primary areas of concern and determine if GBA can meet their needs. During this process, our team will determine your eligibility for services and navigate the insurance process for you. You will be asked to fill out an application, provide proof of medical diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorders, provide a prescription for ABA services, and provide proof of insurance.

The next step is to assess your child's skill level which is necessary to guide the development of an individualized treatment plan. The assessment will be conducted by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and includes the use of various assessment tools. Typically, assessments are conducted in the child's home setting; however, arrangements can be made to conduct the assessment in an area that best suits your family's needs.

Some assessment tools we use include:

- **Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills- Revised (ABLLS-R)**
  The ABLLS-R is an assessment, curriculum guide, and skills tracking system for children with language delays that provides criterion-referenced information about a child's skills which can be used as the basis for selecting objectives and monitoring progress (Partington, 2010).
- **Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS)**
  The AFLS is an assessment, skills tracking system, and curriculum guide for skills that are essential for independence. It assesses the basic abilities as well as more advanced skills of the child which are broken down into six assessment modules: Basic Living Skills, Home Skills, Community Participation Skills, School Skills, Independent Living Skills, and Vocational Skills (Partington & Mueller, 2012).
- **Essential for Living (EFL**)
  EFL is a communication, behavior, and functional skills assessment, curriculum, and skill-tracking instrument for both children and adults with moderate-to-severe disabilities, particularly those with limited communication repertoires, minimal daily living skills, and/or severe problem behavior.
- **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)**
  An FBA is an assessment used to determine the function (i.e., purpose) of problem behavior to select protocols for reduction (e.g., access to tangibles, attention, escape/avoidance, sensory, etc.). It includes various forms of data collection and procedures.
- **Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP)**
  The VB-MAPP is a criterion-referenced assessment based on B.F. Skinner's analysis of Verbal Behavior (1957), in addition to his work in behavioral psychology and learning, led to the field of applied behavior analysis (ABA). The VB-MAPP contains five components (i.e., Milestones Assessment, Barriers Assessment, Transition Assessment, Task Analysis, and Curriculum Placement Guide) that are designed to assess a child's existing skills, determine appropriate treatment plans and placement, and assist in developing treatment goals and objectives. This assessment tool can provide a measurable way for the child's team to make decisions and set priorities regarding the reduction of treatment and/or discharge (Sundberg, 2007).

Once the assessment has been conducted, the BCBA will evaluate the data collected to inform the development of a treatment plan and behavior intervention plan [BIP] (if necessary). The BCBA will create an extensive report of the assessment findings as well as a specific treatment plan, including recommendations for the number of service hours. GBA is dedicated to providing the highest quality of service possible and for this reason, our treatment packages typically include the following services, dependent on your insurance company's approval and medical necessity: direct service hours with a qualified behavior therapist, weekly supervision hours by a BCBA, weekly parent training hours by a BCBA, and weekly treatment planning hours by a BCBA. Coordination of care will also occur at least once per authorization period (typically six months. Coordination of care will be facilitated by the BCBA with help from the parent, and includes communication between the BCBA and other service-providers working with your child (such as the teacher, speech therapist, or occupational therapist.)

Components of our treatment plans might include prompting/prompt fading, errorless teaching, shaping, correction procedures, positive/negative reinforcement, differential reinforcement, pairing procedures, task analysis, chaining procedures, stimulus discrimination training, Verbal Behavior, Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), sign language, speech generating devices, discrete trial instruction, and natural environment teaching.

GBA recognizes that the quality of services we provide is directly dependent on the quality of our providers. In addition, GBA is proud to offer our providers training and continuing education/professional development opportunities which allow for enhanced services to be provided to your child.

When needed, GBA will provide you with contact information for other professionals who may be better able to assist with the needs of the patient if GBA is unable to meet specific treatment needs.

Assessment results are available to the patient and/or family, and a preliminary treatment plan meeting will be scheduled with the patient and ABA professionals to review the proposed service type(s), treatment plan goals and objectives, recommended duration and length of treatment, and a discharge plan for the patient. Upon discharge, recommendations will be provided as a way to support continued progress or address persisting concerns.

The contents of both the assessment and treatment plan will be explained to the patient and/or family, and GBA staff will willingly answer any related questions about the assessment or proposed service. GBA understands that this information is confidential, and will abide by established confidentiality regulations, policies and procedures.

Parent/Caregiver Involvement

Parent/caregiver participation is an expectation of service. Participation may include team meetings, data collection, and implementation of recommended strategies/programs. If there is a lack of involvement, GBA reserves the right to reconsider the appropriateness of service.
A parent/caregiver **MUST** be on the premises during GBA sessions at all times. GBA providers are not permitted to be left alone in the home/service location with a patient. If the parent/ caregiver must leave the premises, the provider will terminate the session. Programs that include self-help skills (showering, toileting, etc.) are only permitted with the presence of a parent/guardian. GBA reserves the right to reconsider the provision of services if there is a failure to comply with this policy.

Parent Training

GBA requires participation in parent training for a minimum of two hours a month. Parent training is critical to promote the generalization of newly-learned skills across all settings and environments. In addition, all insurance carriers require parent training in conjunction with direct care. If parent training is not occurring, insurance carriers will either decrease services or refuse to reauthorize ongoing services. We encourage all parents to take advantage of parent training for hands-on learning in areas of particular difficulty or concern. We believe consistency in interactions and expectations across all caregivers is an important factor in a child's success in his or her program. To schedule a parent training session, please speak with your BCBA.

Patient Rights

As a patient, you have the right to:

- Give informed written consent for assessment, initiation of services, and treatment plan implementation.
- Review records and request copies of any or all parts of that record. To make a request, please contact your GBA Case Manager who will make the record available for review.
- Privacy regarding your family information. GBA adheres to the confidentiality guidelines set forth by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).
- Participate fully in the assessment process and service provision.
- Contact GBA to report any concerns with GBA's services and/or providers.

- Be informed about and appeal any possible changes to the assessment and/or services before those changes are made.
- Participate in all meetings where decisions will be made about changes in assessment and/or services.
- Be treated with respect and in a professional manner at all times.
- Receive services that are provided under GBA's Mission Statement and Core Values.
- Due process (appeal) procedures in cases where there is a disagreement with GBA.

Patient responsibilities

- Provide informed written consent for GBA to assess and provide services.
- Establish and adhere to a schedule with the service providers. GBA's providers are flexible and will work with your family to meet scheduling needs, within reason.
- Participate fully in the assessment process, as well as the ongoing provision of services.
- Be present in the location of service at all times during GBA sessions.
- Treat all GBA providers respectfully and professionally.
- Provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for our providers to provide treatment.
- Respect the roles, responsibilities, and guidelines set forth by GBA for the provision of services by each provider.
- Respect the scope of practice of ABA services provided through insurance.
- Notify the provider before a scheduled session if the child or parent/caregiver is ill so the session can be rescheduled.
- Notify GBA immediately if there is an infectious illness in the home. If anyone has a contagious/communicable condition, medical clearance from a doctor will be required before services can resume. If the child is ill or has a fever or vomits, 24 hours must pass without the fever before treatment may resume. Clearance must specifically state that the patient may return to regular sessions.

Cancellation and Late Policy

CBS requires a minimum of 24 hours notice to cancel a session. The 24 hours policy does not include excused absences. Excused absences shall be determined case by case at the discretion of CBS and may include, but are not limited to sickness, emergencies, or extenuating circumstances. In these circumstances, please call your Case Manager. CBS may ask for verification of excused absences.

In order to provide the best services, CBS adheres to the following fee schedules for our cancellation and late policy:

Situation	**Fee**
No Call - No Show: *Any session that does not start within 10 minutes of the scheduled start time and the family has not contacted CBS.*	$100
Cancellation: *Any session that is canceled with less than 24 hours notice.*	$50
Families covered by Medicaid will be exempt from these fees, but are expected to adhere to this policy.	

Our Illness Policy below outlines instances when your child's session should be canceled due to illness. In situations where a family has canceled their child's appointment 3 or more times in a month, the Case Manager will call a meeting to discuss the situation. CBS may need to consider terminating services.

CBS has a strict cancellation policy for our providers as well. If a CBS provider cancels a session, they will make every effort to make-up the canceled session.

Illness policy

Young children frequently become mildly ill. Deciding whether to cancel your child's home therapy can be difficult. Parents / caregivers need to discuss what observations have been made and agree on a plan of action.
Please contact GBA or your BCBA when your child is ill and describe the illness.

The following is a guideline and recommendation for exclusion from home services:	
Disease or Symptom	**Need to cancel home therapy?**
Body Rash with fever	Yes—seek medical attention. Any rash that spreads quickly, has open, weeping wounds, and/or is not healing should be evaluated
Chicken Pox	Yes—until blisters have dried and crusted (usually 6 days)
Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)	Yes—until 24 hours after treatment
Coughing (severe, uncontrolled coughing or wheezing, rapid or difficulty in breathing)	Yes—medical attention is necessary. authorization for medication/treatment
Coxsackie's Virus (hand, foot, and mouth disease)	No—the child is no longer contagious once the symptomatic rash appears unless the child has mouth sores or is drooling
Fever	Yes—fever over 101 degrees and when fever is accompanied by behavior changes or symptoms of illness, such as rash, sore throat, vomiting, etc.
Mild cold symptoms	A good rule of thumb is to cancel a child's home services at the beginning of a cold—the most infectious time and when they feel the worst. Return to services when they do not have a persistent cough and feel well
Vomiting (2 or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours)	Yes, the child does not have home services until 24 hours following the resolution of the vomiting. Observe for other signs of illness and dehydration

Appointments

GBA is committed to providing consistent, reliable services as scheduled and agreed upon by the patient. GBA will propose a preliminary set of hours for ABA services within the initial treatment plan, taking into consideration medical necessity and the results of the assessment. Once your family has been matched

with a treatment team (BCBA and paraprofessional), we recommend that you work out a monthly/weekly schedule with the providers. This schedule will help to ensure that your child receives consistent services. GBA expects our providers to keep their appointments with your family and we ask that you do the same.

Three consecutive cancellations or a total of five cancellations within one authorization period (typically 6 months) by the patient may result in termination as consistency is critical to your child's success.

GBA requires that you contact your providers and Case Manager directly for all cancellations of sessions/changes in schedule. Please provide as much notice as possible. Case Managers can be reached at 470-361-2000 (see page 2 for a list of extensions.)

Health, Safety, and Security

GBA takes every precaution to ensure that we protect the health, safety, and security of our patients and providers. Providers are trained in how to deal with situations that may arise during sessions. The following are guidelines to help ensure the health, safety, and security of our patients and providers:

- Patients must be supervised at all times. A parent/caregiver must be present in the home/service location for the session.
- Providers will call 911 for all emergencies.
- Providers will not be expected to provide services to patients who are ill.
- Providers will not provide services if anyone in the household has a contagious/communicable/infectious disease. Medical clearance from a physician is required before services can resume following an illness of this nature.
- Providers will not provide services in the presence of a pest infestation.
- Provider will not use corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse and maltreatment.
- GBA does not permit the use of physical holds/restraints. In a crisis, the parent/caregiver may be asked to intervene to ensure safety.
- Providers are not expected to tend to toilet accidents/diaper changes unless the patient has a specified toileting program in their treatment plan.
- GBA does not permit its providers to administer medication under any circumstances, whether such medication is available over-the-counter or is prescribed by a medical practitioner. If a patient requires medication during a session, parents/caregivers must administer the medication.
- BCBAs are mandated reporters and may disclose your health information to appropriate authorities if it is believed that your child is a possible victim of abuse, neglect, domestic violence, or the victim of other crimes.

In the event of an emergency, the provider will follow GBA's notification and reporting policy as outlined in their provider handbooks.

Payment for Services

GBA is dedicated to providing the best possible ABA services to the families we serve. We make every attempt to work with your insurance carrier to have the best possible reimbursement outcome within the guidelines of every policy. We are required per Federal and State insurance laws to inform you of the copayment, deductible, and coinsurance amounts and send invoices to you regularly. Please contact your insurance carrier or your Case Manager for assistance with this process.

Details of Service Home-based Programs

Discipline

GBA believes in the use of positive behavioral support to allow individuals to be successful and prepare them for independent living. Each person is taught with an individualized treatment plan using the principles of applied behavioral analysis. When necessary, a behavior intervention plan is developed and overseen by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. All professional ethical standards are observed. We do not tolerate any form of corporal punishment, humiliation, and /or traumatic treatment.

To help the child differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate responses and behaviors, rewards will be used. Which rewards will be used will depend on the child's individual preference. Common rewards include food (crackers, candy, juice), toys (bubbles, tops, wind-up toys), music, and breaks.

Collaboration with other Professionals and Supplementary Interventions

Your BCBA will make every effort to collaborate with all professionals involved in working with the child. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to inform the BCBA of all professionals currently working with the child, as well as to keep the BCBA informed of any new professionals who provide the child with therapeutic services in the future. Additionally, a signed release of information will be required to correspond with all professionals outside of the GBA therapy team.

Definition of Roles

Parent/Guardian

- Receives training from BCBA on running generalization procedures for all programs
- Conducts generalization procedures for specified programs
- At least one parent/guardian will attend all parent training meetings
- Follows through with appropriate behavior plans as specified in the home environment
- Maintains open communication with BCBA and paraprofessionals regarding challenges with behavior interventions
- Maintains professional relationships with all staff members
- Provides reinforcers and supplies for the program

Paraprofessionals

- Delivers approved hours per week of 1:1 ABA
- Attends all supervision meetings with BCBA
- Meets clinical competencies through assessment and observation by BCBA
- Maintains a professional relationship with parents/guardians and all other staff members

Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA)

- Provides 1 hour of clinical supervision for every 10 hours of direct care.
- Supervises and assists in behavioral and educational program development.
- Reviews and adjusts treatment goals reflecting data recorded; one hour for every 10 hours of direct care.
- Assesses the child to determine the necessity of new programming and ongoing programs
- Supervises monitoring of acquisition rates and program progress
- Maintains a professional relationship with parents/guardians and all other staff

members
- Provides parent training at least twice a month

Scope of Practice

GBA agrees to provide services that are within our scope of practice and area of expertise. For that reason, GBA will only provide services based on the principles of ABA. Goals/objectives will be determined solely based on the results from our assessment, parent/caregiver input, medical necessity, and other factors that may influence the development of an appropriate ABA treatment plan.

Academic goals will **not** be considered due to the nature of the services we provide per the insurance payment. GBA providers will **only** be expected to perform the duties and responsibilities as outlined by their job description from GBA. Please feel free to contact the GBA administrative team with questions/concerns about the duties and responsibilities of our providers.

Documentation

GBA is required to maintain proper clinical documentation for all ABA sessions. To facilitate this, the **last 15 minutes** of each session may be allocated for any necessary paperwork, such as completing the session note and entering data into the electronic filing system.

Community Outings and Transportation

Community outings are often included as a part of an individual's treatment plan (with patient approval). These outings can occur without the parent/caregiver's presence if the proper consent forms have been signed. Please contact your Case Manager with any questions/concerns regarding this policy and the necessary consent forms. GBA policy permits providers to accompany a patient in a vehicle driven by a parent/ caregiver, in a taxi/car service arranged for by the patient, on public transportation (e.g., bus, train, subway, etc.), or on foot if the proper consent forms have been signed. In addition, providers may be eligible to transport a patient in their vehicle, if the provider has met the company regulations and the proper consent forms have been signed.

Communication

GBA is committed to responding promptly to any questions, comments, concerns, or complaints regarding ABA services. Our team is committed to providing the best quality service to patients, which includes timely, professional communication. The patients will be provided with the telephone numbers and email addresses of those individuals involved in direct treatment service and planning. Our administrative team is available during business hours at 470-361-2000.
GBA does not offer on-call coverage for ABA services and programs on a 24-hour basis. Patients are advised to call 911 in case of an emergency or crisis.

In-Home Treatment Policies and Guidelines

- A parent/ caregiver (as indicated on the child's form) **must** be present in the home during the therapy session at all times, except for approved community outings (described above).
- It is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to provide a therapeutic environment in the home that is free from distractions or interruptions. In most cases, this includes pets or siblings that could interfere with the progress of the session. In some circumstances, the provider may request the presence of parents or siblings for training purposes; however, in other situations, the provider may request that parents, siblings, pets be removed from the treatment environment in order not to disrupt the session.
- In some situations, problem behavior may occur. These behaviors might include but are not

limited to verbal or physical aggression, property destruction, self-injurious behaviors, etc. Our providers are trained on how to de-escalate, manage, and reduce problem behavior. Therefore, parent/caregiver intervention is discouraged in these situations unless explicitly requested by the provider in order not to disrupt treatment.

- The family may be asked to provide materials for the patient that will facilitate therapeutic progress. Such materials often include edibles or other preferred items that are typically used in verbal behavior programs. The provider may also request specific items that will be necessary for specific behavioral targets.
- GBA provides **some** program materials for our patients. These materials remain the property of GBA. Occasionally, providers will request to store these materials in your home between sessions to ensure that they have a robust selection of materials to use with your child. If you do not feel comfortable with this, please speak with the provider about making alternate arrangements. If a provider does store program materials in the home between sessions, the patient is responsible for ensuring that the materials remain in a secure location where they will not be in between sessions. This is essential to ensure that our providers have all of the materials they need readily available during sessions so as not to disrupt treatment. It is also important for health, safety, and sanitary reasons.
- GBA will send an iPad to your home for use by the BCBA and the paraprofessional(s) during the session. When not in use, the iPad should be kept in a secure location (night table / upper cabinet). If the iPad is damaged during the session, that is the responsibility of GBA. However, if the iPad is damaged when it should have been kept in a secure location, the family will be held responsible.
- GBA is **not** responsible for other children in the household that are not patients of the company. Additionally, the company is not responsible for pets.

Right to Notice

Under the Health Insurance Portability and Accessibility Act (HIPAA), your protected health information can be used for treatment, payment, and healthcare operations.
As a patient, you have the right to:

- Confidential communications regarding your protected information.
- Inspect and copy your protected health information.
- Amend your protected information
- Receive an account of disclosures of your protected health information.
- A paper copy of this privacy notice.

GBA adheres to HIPAA standards and does not sell or disclose any confidential information. GBA will follow the guidelines of any legal documentation regarding the disclosure of any protected information.
We will not disclose your medical information unless we receive written permission from you to do so or the law authorizes us or compels us to do so. If you require a copy of your child's record, please contact the GBA office.

Quality Assurance

A parent/guardian has the right to inform (in writing or by phone) GBA of any concerns that they have regarding staff performance. GBA will make every attempt to ensure that all staff members working with the child have adequate training.

Conflicts of Interest

To protect the confidentiality of patients and their families as well as providers, GBA follows HIPAA

guidelines. Providers are discouraged from personal interaction with current or former patients. Such interaction includes personal relationships and email, as well as social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and other social media.

Discharge/Termination of Services

When your child has met the goals set for therapy and is progressing developmentally within expected functional parameters, your BCBA will begin to discuss discharge and the next stages of your child's development. If your child reaches a plateau, your therapist may suggest a break from treatment. If your child shows any sign of significant regression after discharge, please contact us for a consultation. If you do not feel your child is ready for discharge you may contact the Clinical Director and request a clinical review.

GBA reserves the right to terminate services at any time. Reasons for termination of services include inappropriate behaviors, cancellations/no-shows, failure to pay outstanding balances, a conflict of interest develops or if we are unable to provide the services that your child requires.

Exploitation, Abuse, Neglect, or Violation of Patient Rights

GBA staff must report if there are any suspected physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful behaviors towards a child. Staff will inform the State Central Registry (SCR). It is the responsibility of the SCR to contact the family directly. If we feel the child /parent/caregiver is a danger to themselves or others, emergency services will be called to manage the situation in conjunction with an SCR report.