



**HIGHLIGHTS  
HEALTHCARE**

## **An autism diagnosis for your child can be a life-changing event for you and your family, but you're not alone.**

### *Take a deep breath*

A diagnosis of autism doesn't change who your child is or what they can accomplish. Evidence based interventions such as Applied Behavior Analysis are proven to have a positive impact on cognition, communication, social skills, problem solving, adaptive skills, and overall quality of life.

### *Know that you are not alone*

We are here to connect you with resources and support. Our team will be with you each step of the way to provide guidance, answer questions, and access to care.

### *Assessment for Early Intervention ABA Therapy*

Highlights Healthcare is committed to providing individualized and specialized care. After diagnosis many children benefit from ABA therapy. An ABA assessment is the next step. Assessments are conducted at one of our Learning Centers and establish the specific, recommended therapy plan for your child's optimal success. The sooner therapy sessions begin, the more effective the outcomes.

*Please note: Highlights Healthcare is a provider of Early Intervention ABA Therapy services. We respect an individual's/family's choice of care provider after a diagnosis is confirmed.*

In the United States, the CDC reported that 1 in 36 children (aged 8 years) received a diagnosis of autism in 2020. If your child has been diagnosed with autism, our team will be with you each step of the way for questions, scheduling, and what to expect.

Highlights Healthcare specializes in serving young learners with Medicaid benefits. We believe every child has the ability to achieve great things, and we are guided by family-centered principles that demonstrate dignity and respect.

The earlier therapy services begin, the greater impact they provide for the learner.



**704-572-3810**

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## **My Child was Diagnosed with Autism**

**What Happens Next?**

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## What is Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)?

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that affects communication and behavior.

Autism impacts how a child's brain develops and as a result how a child communicates, interacts, and learns. We may see signs as early as age one. Scientists believe there are multiple causes of autism.

It is a "spectrum" because individuals with ASD can have very different behavioral characteristics, cognitive abilities, and language skills. Some of these include difficulties with communication and social skills like speaking and/or nonverbal language (e.g., gestures, pointing); delayed or no response to name; minimal eye contact; struggle with initiating play or conversation with others; or to recognize others' emotions or social cues. Children with autism may have restricted or repetitive behaviors like challenges with change or transitions; repetitive speech, body movements, or play; attachments to objects, topics, or people; and/or sensory sensitivities (visual, sound, touch/texture, taste/oral-motor, smell).

## What is ABA Therapy?

The goal of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is to teach, improve, or replace specific behaviors to increase an independence and quality of life. We work to promote a rich and meaningful life **as the child would define it**. The goal is **not** to change who your child is, but to give them the tools they need to reach their full potential and to be as independent, happy, safe, and successful as possible.

- ABA therapy teaches children by breaking down tasks or skills into small steps. ABA therapists use praise, favorite items, or favorite activities to build on the child's progress as they learn.
- Skills often addressed in ABA:
  - Functional communication (requesting, increasing vocabulary and sentence structure, and conversation)
  - Play and social skills
  - Tolerance and waiting
  - Life skills (safety, hygiene, and using the restroom)
  - Unsafe behavior (Replace with skills such as communication, coping, and regulating emotion)

ABA is **not** a "quick fix," but will have lasting impacts. These new behaviors and skills learned in ABA can be transferred from the child's therapy setting to other settings such as home, school, community events, etc.

## ABA: What to Expect?

### Learning Center Services

- You will drop off/pick up your child for their session.
- Targets socialization skills.
- This is NOT daycare. Our Centers and ABA may look like "play," but are specifically designed care.
- ABA should be FUN for your child!

### Initial Assessment

- Meet with the BCBA (Board-Certified Behavior Analyst).
- They will interview, observe, and assess your child's strengths and needs.
- The BCBA will recommend scheduled ABA per week (15-40 hours) depending on your child's specific goals.

### Parent Involvement

- We provide the tools to help teach and support the reality of raising a child with autism.
- Your BCBA will regularly discuss your child's successes, new interventions, or any barriers to their progress.
- Your child's attendance for the recommended amount of therapy is important. Please talk with your BCBA if there are schedule concerns.