

Expanding Access of Applied Behavior Analysis Services for Autistic Children From Low Income Families



Penn Undergraduate Research Mentoring Program

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Background

- Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder that is most often diagnosed in early childhood indicated by verbal communication problems.
- Families are highly recommended to receive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) with a certified ABA therapist because it is a research-based service that helps autistic children develop social skills that are transferrable in various life scenarios.
- Research found that ABA is effective in improving autistic children's IQ in verbal and non-verbal tests, language, and behavior (Makrygianni, et al., 2018).

Problem

- Autistic children from low income families are less likely to have ABA.
- Common barriers include large distances from providers, long waiting times for appointments, and costs not covered by insurance (Littman et al., 2023).

Importance

- Autistic children from under resourced backgrounds may have poor academic, social, and behavior outcomes due to their lack of access to quality services.
- Expanding ABA can help reduce these disparities amongst autistic children and help them have better quality of life regardless of their economic background.



Potential Solution

Caregiver Coaching Telehealth

- Providers can teach caregivers how to incorporate communication development strategies in their daily routines.
- **Benefits** (Lindgren et al., 2016)
 - o **Cost-Efficient:** Parents can save money on clinic room usage, provider transportation, and advanced clinic technology costs.
 - o **Time Efficient:** Caregivers and providers do not need to travel to meet for sessions.
 - o **High Quality:** Telehealth is just as effective as in home and in clinic sessions.
 - o **Caregiver Empowerment:** Caregiver coaching increases caregivers' confidence to support their autistic children from their homes (Gentile et al., 2022).

References

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PEACE for ImPACT

Study Background:

- We evaluated the providers' implementation of an ABA based training in their sessions with caregivers and young autistic children in Philly.

Benefits:

- We work with providers who serve under resourced and high need families of young autistic children.
- We expand access of ABA services to low income families.

Personal Goal:

- I aspire to become a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and build my own clinic that supports more autistic children from low income families.

Role in PEACE for ImPACT

- I used fidelity forms that analyze how much of the training the providers are implementing in their sessions.
- I had hands on experience improving autistic children's social skills in play activities.
- I researched Philly sensory friendly fun events for autistic children for social media content.

