



**Traina
Behavioral**
LEARN • GROW • THRIVE

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES · LANGHORNE, PA

Your Child Was Diagnosed with Autism. Where Do You Start?

A practical guide to understanding insurance, therapy hours, and the first decisions families may face.

Educational guide for parents. Not medical advice. Progress looks different for every child and cannot be guaranteed.



5–10 minute read



Educational guide for parents



Not medical advice

From Traina Behavioral

Langhorne, Pennsylvania · trainabehavioral.com

WHAT'S INSIDE

A short map of the next few decisions.

You can read this straight through, or jump to the part you need today. Nothing here has to be done in order.

01	You're not alone in this	Where to begin
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Start anywhere. Stop anytime.

This guide is meant to lower the number of decisions in front of you today — not add to them. If you only read one section, make it **Section 9: Your next 48 hours.**

You're not alone in this

A new autism diagnosis can bring relief, fear, uncertainty, or all three at once. You do not have to understand every service or make every decision today.

This guide will help you organize the information, understand your options, and know which questions to ask — so you can take the next step with a clearer head.



What this is

A short, practical guide for families after a diagnosis.



What this isn't

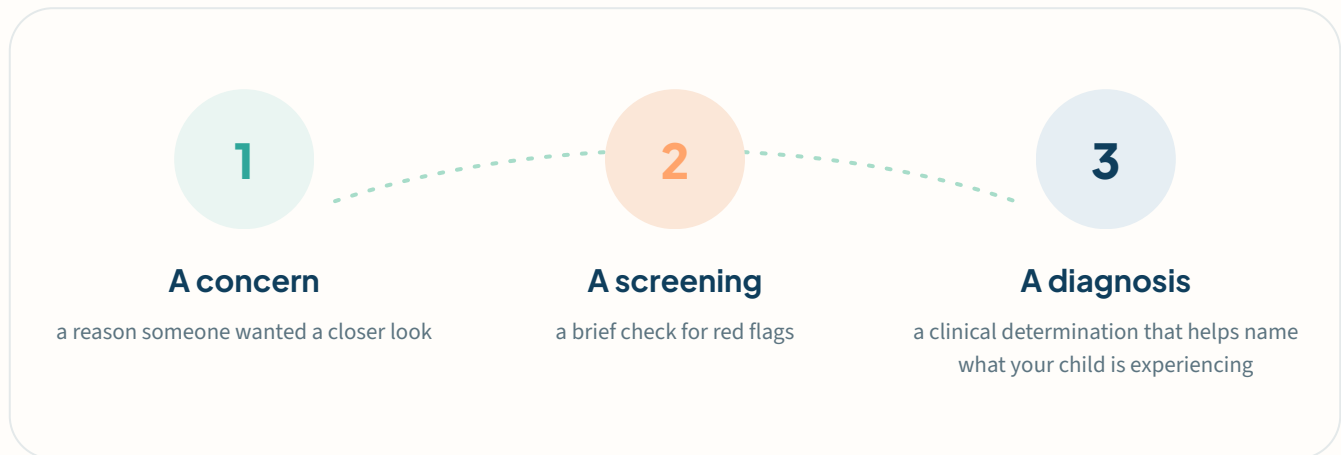
Medical advice, a complete directory of every program in Pennsylvania, or a sales pitch. Progress looks different for every child and cannot be guaranteed.



Everything in this guide is written to be useful whether or not you ever contact us. Take what helps, leave what doesn't, and come back to it when you need it.

What the diagnosis means (in plain English)

You may have heard words like *concern*, *screening*, and *diagnosis* on the way here. In plain terms:



A diagnosis may help your child qualify for services and support, although requirements vary by service and insurance plan.

A diagnosis does not change who your child is.

Children with the same diagnosis may have very different strengths and support needs. Every child's progress and response to treatment will look different — and no provider can honestly guarantee a specific outcome.

Publicly funded and insurance-funded supports

After a diagnosis, families often hear about two kinds of support. They are not the same thing, and many children use both over time.



PUBLICLY FUNDED

Early Intervention & school-based services

Depending on your child's age and where you live, you may explore Early Intervention (for younger children) or school-based evaluations and services (often starting around age 3). These supports are typically educational or developmental and are based on eligibility rules for that program.



INSURANCE FUNDED

ABA as clinical treatment

Families may also explore Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) through health insurance when it is covered and medically necessary. ABA is clinical treatment — different from public Early Intervention or preschool special education.

Publicly funded services and ABA may address different needs. Many children receive both based on their individual situation. **You do not have to choose one path and ignore the other on day one.**



A small practical step

Write down what the diagnosing clinician told you, and keep paperwork in one place. You will need it for insurance calls, evaluations, and provider conversations.

Helpful terms



What is ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis, or ABA, is individualized clinical treatment that helps children build meaningful skills across many areas of development. This may include language and communication, social skills, learning readiness, play, daily living skills, independence, safety, emotional regulation, and reducing behaviors that interfere with daily life. ABA is based on a clinical assessment and may be covered by insurance when medically necessary.



What is Early Intervention?

Early Intervention is a publicly funded program for eligible children from birth to age 3 who have developmental delays or disabilities. It may provide developmental supports based on the child's individual needs. Early Intervention is not the same as ABA. A child may receive both when appropriate, and one does not automatically replace the other.



What is an Intermediate Unit?

In Pennsylvania, an Intermediate Unit provides preschool special education services for eligible children ages 3–5. Services are based on the child's educational needs and may include classroom-based, developmental, or related supports through an Individualized Education Program, or IEP. Intermediate Unit services are not the same as ABA. ABA is medically necessary clinical treatment, while Intermediate Unit services are educational and developmental supports. A child may receive both when appropriate, and one does not automatically replace the other.



Different funding sources, different rules, different purposes — but not competing choices. Many families end up using more than one.

Questions to ask your insurance

Insurance questions can feel overwhelming. A short script helps. Call the member-services number on your insurance card (or the behavioral health number, if one is listed) and ask:



YOUR PHONE SCRIPT

- 01 Does our plan cover ABA or autism services?
- 02 Is our ABA or autism coverage managed through a separate behavioral health company?
- 03 Is a diagnostic report, referral, prescription, or prior authorization required?
- 04 Which providers are in-network for ABA?
- 05 What are our deductibles, copays, or benefit limits?

Two distinctions that matter

“Accepting your insurance” is not the same as being in-network. A provider can accept your insurance card and still leave you with unexpected out-of-network costs. Ask clearly whether a provider is in-network for your specific plan.

Ask how benefits are verified before treatment starts. Request written verification of benefits when possible, and ask how the provider handles patient responsibility — including whether they balance-bill for the difference between charges and the insurer’s contracted allowance.

While you're on the call, write down:

Date and time

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Representative's name

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Reference or
confirmation number

.....

Answers to each
question above

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**You do not need perfect answers today. You need a
starting record you can build on.**

Understanding therapy hours



ABA hours are clinical treatment hours — not daycare.

Different children need different levels of support. Some children may need many daytime hours; others may need fewer. The appropriate number of hours is individualized and based on a clinical assessment.

THE PHRASE YOU'LL HEAR

Medical necessity

In plain terms, that means the amount and type of treatment that is clinically needed to address your child's identified needs and treatment goals — not a one-size-fits-all schedule, and not a childcare arrangement.

Questions worth asking any provider

- What level of treatment intensity is recommended for my child, and why?
- In what setting will treatment take place (center, home, school, community)?
- How will our family be involved?
- How will progress be reviewed, and how often?

How to choose an ABA provider

Good questions protect your family. You are allowed to ask them before you commit.

ASK BEFORE YOU COMMIT

- 01 Who will work with my child day to day?
- 02 Will my ABA program be overseen by a BCBA?
- 03 How is each treatment plan individualized?
- 04 How are families included?
- 05 What settings do you offer?
- 06 What should we expect regarding availability and wait times?

GREEN FLAGS

- ✓ Clear, specific answers
- ✓ Individualized treatment plans
- ✓ Meaningful BCBA involvement
- ✓ A whole-family focus
- ✓ No pressure to enroll before you understand the plan

RED FLAGS

- Guarantees of specific outcomes
- High-pressure enrollment before a clinical evaluation
- Unclear BCBA supervision
- Presenting ABA primarily as childcare rather than clinical treatment



Trust your gut when answers are vague. Clarity is a reasonable expectation.

About Traina Behavioral



Traina Behavioral is a privately owned ABA practice based in Langhorne, Pennsylvania.

We serve families throughout Bucks and Philadelphia counties, parts of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, and Mercer County, New Jersey.

FOUNDED BY

Allison Lynn Traina, M.S., BCBA, BCC, LBS, LBA

Licensed by the Pennsylvania and New Jersey State Boards of Medicine.

We take a whole-family approach: **parents and caregivers are part of the process, not spectators.** Services may be provided in center, home, school, and community settings, as clinically appropriate and available.



No pressure — a clear conversation is enough

If you have questions about ABA, insurance coverage, the assessment process, current availability, or whether Traina's services may be appropriate for your child and family, you are welcome to reach out.

Your next 48 hours

You do not need to do everything at once. These six steps are enough for the next couple of days.

- ☐ Request a copy of your child's diagnostic report and any written recommendations.

- ☐ Write down any remaining questions for the diagnosing clinician.

- ☐ Keep your child's important documents and information together in one place.

- ☐ Call your insurance plan using the questions in Section 5.

- ☐ Identify your family's three most important priorities right now.

- ☐ Contact an ABA provider to ask about the assessment process, insurance participation, treatment recommendations, service settings, and current availability.

You do not need to pursue every available service. The goal is to understand your options and determine what is appropriate for your child and family.

IN CLOSING

One informed step at a time is enough.

You do not have to have the full map today — only the next clear move.



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GET IN TOUCH

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✉️ info@trainabehavioral.com 🔗 trainabehavioral.com

If you want to talk through ABA, insurance questions, assessment, or availability, contact the Traina team. We're glad to help you sort the next step.

Brief Pennsylvania resources

These official pages can help you explore public programs. They are starting points — not a full directory.



Pennsylvania Early Intervention

pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/early-learning-child-care/early-intervention-services



Pennsylvania Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS)

pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/medicaid/bhc/ibhs



Pennsylvania Autism Insurance Act

pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/for-providers/developmental-programs-for-providers/pa-autism-insurance-act



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Disclaimer: This guide is educational only. It is not medical advice. Every child's progress and response to treatment looks different and cannot be guaranteed. Decisions about diagnosis, treatment, and insurance should be made with qualified professionals and your plan documents.