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BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENTS: WHAT TO EXPECT

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So, your child's neurologist or pediatrician recommends ABA for your child and you have no idea what to do from there. You leave the doctor's office with a ton of unanswered questions. This column will help explain who to go to and what behavior assessments usually entail. First, go to www.bacb.com to find a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst in your area. Then you will have to set up an appointment for an initial assessment. While you are setting up the appointment for the initial assessment, it is highly recommended to send over any medical records of previous assessments, IEPs (if applicable) or psychological evaluations. The analyst will review all documents submitted prior to the assessment. Next, one of two things can happen. Because behavior therapy can be rendered in any setting, it really depends on the agency and/or analyst as to where the assessment is conducted. It can be done in home, in a clinic or in the setting in which the problem behaviors occur.

The assessment(s) themselves are selected based on medical necessity, age, verbal repertoire and functional daily skills. The most common assessments used are VB-MAPP, ABLLS-R, Autism Social Skills Profile, Vineland and the PDDBI. However, the single most important part of the assessment is the functional assessment. Why? Well, think of the functional assessment as the heart and soul of the treatment plan. This type of assessment helps understand what drives behavior. Without it, treatment will likely not be effective. Once the analyst understands why the behavior is occurring, a treatment plan can be created addressing teaching new skills while replacing maladaptive behaviors. After the assessment is conducted, a treatment plan, tailored to your child's needs will then be created. A good treatment plan should align with family goals and objectives.

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