



FEAT-Houston

Families for Effective
Autism Treatment

July 2010

News

3946 Glade Valley Drive, Kingwood, Texas 77339

281-361-3328

www.feathouston.org

July Workshop

The ABCs of ABA Essential Skills

The ABCs of ABA is an excellent starting point for parents, therapists, teachers, case workers, family and friends as well as a great opportunity to review the basic principles involved in teaching new skills and creating and maintaining positive learning behavior in children and adults with autism. It is especially useful for parents and schools facing the need to provide introductory training when hiring and training staff to work with individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities.

This workshop is available for Texas Education Agency Continuing Professional Education Credits (CPE hours).

Saturday, July 31, 2010

University of Houston, Central Campus

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Registration: 8:30 – 9:00 a.m.

Box lunch provided.

Presented by Dr. Gerald Harris, Executive Director of the Texas Young Autism Project and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA-D), the ABCs of ABA will feature lecture, video, and hands-on modeling. Discounts are available for early registration and seating is limited.

A registration form for this workshop, with fees and deadlines, is available online at www.feathouston.org or by email at feathouston@yahoo.org.

For additional information: ejbgoudeau@aol.com

Community Outreach Workshop

Answering the WH Questions of Inclusion: When, Where, Who, Why, What and How?

(Includes Childcare)

Free! Refundable deposit required.

Presented by
Including Kids, Inc.

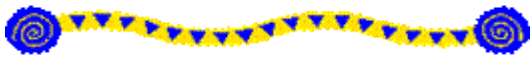
**10 a.m. - 12 noon
Saturday, August 28
5364 FM 1960 East, Humble, TX 77346**

Sponsored in partnership with FEAT-Houston

Including a child with autism in typical school classrooms and activities can feel like an intimidating goal. Parents and teachers want children with autism spectrum disorders to be successful in typical school and community environments but introducing them into these environments so that they can have positive experiences requires planning and careful execution. As we outline the WH questions parents and teachers should ask, this workshop will focus on assessing a child's skills and how they match the inclusive environment being considered as well as the supports needed to assure success.

Parents, teachers and other professionals are welcome to attend. For families, the workshop includes childcare, an interaction group for children with autism, plus a sibling support group so that parents can attend the workshop session while their children are supervised.

Registration Deadline: August 21st. For information and to obtain a registration form: www.includingkids.org or 281-852-0501.



FEAT-Houston 2010 Calendar of Events

FEAT-Houston Meetings are held at various locations throughout Houston. For more information on any event, send an email to feathouston@yahoo.com.

July 8: FEAT-Houston Meeting, Ideas from the Experts at ABAI, Depelchin Children's Center

July 31: ABCs of ABA Workshop, University of Houston Central Campus, Dr. Gerald Harris, BCBA-D

Aug. 19: FEAT- Ft. Bend (Sugar Land)

Sep. 9: FEAT-Houston Meeting

Sep. 25: 123s of ABA - Assessing and Using Reinforcement - Jennifer Dantzler, M.S., BCBA, Including Kids

Oct. 16: 123s of ABA - Maximizing Cooperative Behavior

Oct. 14: FEAT- Ft. Bend (Sugar Land)

Nov. 11: FEAT-Houston Meeting

Nov. 13: 123s of ABA - Teaching & Changing Behavior of Adolescents and Adults

View our online calendar for details and updates under "Events" - www.feathouston.org



FEAT-Houston Meeting **Ideas from the Experts:** **Parents & Professionals Share Ideas from the National Conference**

Thursday, July 8
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Depelchin Children's Center-Room C/D
4950 Memorial Dr., Houston

Do you have a child or student who touches objects and people repetitively?

Do you need ideas for how to do video modeling in a snap?

Do you want a fresh take on how to use a 'break' card to reduce problem behavior when you ask your child or student to complete a task?

These ideas are among those to be shared by therapists and parents who attended the Association for Behavior Analysis International annual conference held last month in San Antonio. Other topics people plan to bring include a quick take on Dr. Patrick McGreevy's new Language for Living Assessment Tool, how to assess and address social skills, and a note on how the Texas Young Autism Project is developing new assessment tool norms for children with autism.

Come enjoy an evening of discussion, quick overviews and refreshments. Don't miss these ideas gathered from the experts! (They say it takes up to eight years for great ideas from ABA research to trickle down to the mainstream...get them now!)

This forum will include brief presentations, single-page handouts and more, plus an opportunity to meet with others "in the know." **All attendees to ABAI are invited to come and bring a 3-5 minute idea to share along with a 1/2-1 page handout.**

FEAT-Houston meetings are free. We regret we are unable to provide childcare. Directions: From I-45 South take the Allen Parkway exit heading west. Take the Waugh Dr. ramp. Turn right on Waugh Dr. Take Memorial Dr. West ramp. Turn right on Memorial Dr. Take the Shepherd Dr. ramp. Stay straight to stay on Memorial Drive. Depelchin Children's Center is on the right with parking behind the building. From I-45 North take the Houston Ave. exit 47B toward Memorial Drive. Stay straight to go onto Houston Ave. and keep right at the fork continue on Houston Ave. Turn left onto W. Capitol Street, which becomes Memorial Drive. Turn slight left onto ramp. Merge onto Memorial Dr. Take the ramp toward Shepherd Dr. Stay straight to stay on Memorial Drive. Depelchin Children's Center is on the right with parking behind the building.

September Workshop

Reinforcement: It's More Than Just M&Ms and "Good Job!"

A Workshop in the 123s of ABA Series

Effective teaching is dependent on effective motivation. A critical challenge in supporting students with autism often is discovering what will motivate an individual child, teen or adult to put effort into learning. Applying proven motivational tools consistently can help the learner build fluency in new skills. Topics to be covered in this workshop include an overview of the types of reinforcement, key elements of effective reinforcement, how to apply differential reinforcement, and token schedules (how to start one, different types, and how to monitor their effectiveness.) This workshop is available for Texas Education Agency Continuing Professional Education Credits (CPE hours).

Saturday, September 25, 2010
University of Houston, Central Campus

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Registration: 8:30 – 9:00 a.m.

Lunch provided.

Jennifer Dantzler, M.S., BCBA, is Executive Director of Including Kids, Inc., a private program for students with autism spectrum disorders in Humble, Texas. She earned her master's degree in intensive special needs from Simmons College in Boston and a post-master's certificate in autism from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD. She has worked at the New England Center for Children and in home programs supervised by Lovaas consultants, Alpine Learning Group, Dr. Patrick McGreevy, and others. While receiving her certificate in autism, she was the principal of the LEAP Program (Life Skills and Education for Persons with Autism and other Pervasive Behavioral Disorders) at the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, MD.

A registration form for this workshop, with fees and deadlines, is available online at www.feathouston.org or by email at feathouston@yahoo.org.

Obtaining Insurance Coverage for Intensive ABA Programs

Is your company's insurance plan a full-coverage or self-insured plan? Are you relying on Medicaid or CHIP? Are you in the military and covered by Tricare?



Knowing the type of insurance coverage available to your family is the first step in negotiating the challenging maze of obtaining reimbursement for intensive ABA programs for children with autism, according to two professionals and a parent advocate who spoke at

FEAT-Houston's Ft. Bend meeting on Thursday, June 17th.

Christie Enzinna of ABA Professional Services, Wendy Neely of the Texas Young Autism Project and Cynthia Singleton, a parent and past board member of FEAT-Houston who actively lobbied to reform insurance laws pertaining to autism coverage in Texas, addressed the state of insurance coverage for autism on the federal and state level and provided an overview of the types of plans providing coverage, some of the challenges in obtaining it, and the intricacies of insurance billing that may trip up ABA providers – who are usually board certified behavior analysts (BCBAs) providing site-based or in-home services to children with autism.

Resources

A PowerPoint overview of the presentation is available on FEAT-Houston's website, plus you may visit www.autismvotes.org as an excellent resource for information on legislation affecting insurance coverage for autism on both the state and federal levels.



Fully-Insured Programs

Come Under New State Law

The good news is that the State of Texas was the third to pass a law addressing insurance coverage for children with autism, "but your insurance has to be what's known as a 'fully-insured' program to be required to follow the state laws that now require coverage for children up to age 10," noted Christie Enzinna, M.S., BCBA, a private behavior consultant who works with families and their children with autism. Both large and small employers may offer 'fully-insured' plans under which an insurance carrier pays for all claims and administers the benefits. (*Cont'd on next page...*)

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Self-Insured Plans, Military & Medicaid Coverages

On the other hand, so-called “self-insured” or “administrative service only” ASO plans, whereby the employer actually pays claims but the plan is administered by an insurer such as United Healthcare or Blue Cross/Blue Shield, are not governed by the state laws that were passed in the last two legislative sessions. Enzinna noted that “they may choose to cover ABA services for autism, but they are not required to do so at this point.”

In these plans, each employer tailors its coverage and chooses the diagnoses, treatments, deductibles, copays, and out of pocket maximums, which are described in the **Summary Plan Description** – the key document to request and review when seeking coverage.

While the **military** has been providing some coverage of ABA services through Tricare (Check out www.autismservicesnorth.com), there are reports that this now is being limited. There is no coverage of ABA services for autism through **Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program** (CHIP) due to issues in covering BCBA’s that have not yet been resolved under the Texas Administrative Code, according to parent advocate Cynthia Singleton, who noted that lobbying continues to write this coverage into the Texas program. Coverage for BCBA hours is available for those on the Medicaid-waiver **Home & Community-Based Services** Program for those with disabilities who’ve cleared the long waiting lists.

Mental Health Parity

When seeking coverage, it’s important to note that legislation at the Federal level, including the Mental Health Parity Act (1996) and the Wellstone-Domenici Mental Health Parity Act, an 89-page addition to the “bailout” package in 2008 that took effect January 1, 2010, are ending health insurance benefit inequity between so-called “mental health disorders” and the medical/surgical benefits for group plans with more than 50 employees. Plans can no longer charge different deductibles, co-pays or expense limits for behavioral health and medical coverages if the plan provides coverage at all for mental health, which is the category in which autism treatments are often paid for those over age 10.

Finding an Ally on the “Inside”

“It’s essential to develop a very strong rapport with someone in your company’s human resources department,” noted Wendy Neely, BCaBA, who administers insurance filing for the Texas Young Autism Project’s clients. “A lot of employers aren’t even aware

that they aren’t covering ABA, so you have an opportunity to educate them and lobby for them to include this coverage in their plan.” Neely recommends aligning with any other employees who have children with autism and presenting to the human resources or insurance staff the PowerPoint available at www.autismvotes.org under Resources & Autism Insurance Reform Resources for Self-Insured Companies.

What’s Usually Covered

Site-based ABA providers (see www.feathouston.org under Resources) delivering services to children in the Greater Houston area are reporting that between 50% and 75% of the clients they serve are now getting insurance reimbursement for their children’s intensive applied behavior analysis programs, consisting of 25-40 hours a week of direct service—most often 1:1 therapy.



Most insurance carriers who are covering this service are authorizing payments to BCBA/BCBA-Ds, licensed psychologist with autism and ABA expertise, and licensed mental health professionals with autism and ABA expertise. They are not authorizing treatment for BCaBA’s or unlicensed and uncertified therapists, although some are paying for the time of “extenders” with proper documentation that they are supervised by the BCBA, said Enzinna.

“Insurers still consider ABA experimental because single-subject studies are not the norm in the medical field,” noted Enzinna. “It is important to get a doctor’s prescription for ABA because if a doctor is diagnosing and prescribing this treatment it is then a matter of medical necessity as opposed to an educational treatment determined under an IEP, for example.”

Plans that do not specifically exclude coverage for ABA and autism may be required to cover it under their mental health coverage, but more plans, particularly those in which the claim payments are self-funded by an employer, are specifically excluding autism coverage, so it is important for employees to raise awareness within HR of the importance of this coverage to families, said Neely.

Steps to Follow in Filing Claims

Providing a sample insurance claim form (“1500”), Enzinna and Neely outlined some “to do’s” and “mistakes to avoid” for ABA providers who are filing insurance claims, including:

- Obtaining prior authorization from the carrier when necessary

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- Getting an "out of network" exception when no "in-network" ABA provider is available in the area
- Using correct diagnoses and treatment (CPT or H) codes (avoid red flag codes and terms, such as "developmental delay" vs. a safer expressive/receptive language disorder code)
- Counting treatment "units" correctly (1 unit = 15 minutes, for example)

If Your Claim is Denied

Using the appeals process outlined in the company's insurance plan is essential when a claim is denied, emphasized Neely. "Often claims are denied due to a clerical error, which is easy to fix, but even claims denied because the reviewers believe coverage isn't available for the service may be paid following review higher up the ladder."

Knowing the process to appeal and maintaining contact with people in your human resources department is important, she said, but HR probably won't know about your claim until the third or fourth appeal and will not step in until that point.

"The first family that I heard of getting insurance coverage for their child's ABA program nine years ago was through a self-insured plan at their company," concurred Singleton. "It took them three years, but they were reimbursed retroactively for their full program."

Given the changing insurance landscape and strong advocacy at the state and national level for insurance coverage for autism, the future continues to brighten for reimbursement to families for the costs of autism treatment, especially for parents and providers who are persistent.

Dental Tool Kit to Promote Good Oral Health Care for Kids with Autism



For some children with autism, oral health habits can be challenging. Autism Speaks has teamed up with Colgate and Philips Sonicare to create a [dental guide and video](#) to provide tips for improving oral hygiene at home, as well as information about how parents and dental professionals can make a visit to the dentist's office less

stressful and more productive. The kit is available at: http://www.autismspeaks.org/community/family_services/dental.php.

Classifieds

Part-time Family Assistant Position Available

Meyerland/Westbury area family looking for an energetic, fun-loving and patient family assistant to help mom with her three children with neuro-developmental disabilities (autism spectrum and ADHD). Experience in special education or behavior disorders is preferred, but, if you love kids, have a big heart and want to help children succeed, then you may be a great fit for our family! We need someone to help keep the weekday after-school hours running smoothly. We would also appreciate the help monitoring behavior, modeling appropriate language, etc. Position available August 1st. Please call 713-320-5380 for more information and a full job description.

Tango! Communication Device For Sale

This device has a six-picture interface, built-in camera, voice choices, typing capability, computer and script download connectivity, etc. It is designed for children and young adults with a range of communication abilities and learning challenges resulting from conditions like autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and traumatic brain injury. Includes Body Glove carrier. Retail for about \$7,500. Unused and selling for about \$4,800 by family. 281-359-8616. View: www.dynavoxtech.com/products/tango/default.aspx

FEAT- Houston Board of Directors 2010

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Ask Your Friends and Family to Donate by Shopping!

Please update your Kroger card this month! It's easy to donate to FEAT-Houston's scholarship and programming activities by shopping at Kroger and Randalls. What's more...your friends and family can help too! Just ask them to **bring the bar code included in this newsletter** to the Kroger cashier and have the cashier scan it to enroll in the Neighbor to Neighbor program. (You have to re-enroll each year, so if you haven't done so this month, be sure to re-enroll today!) Once you enroll, you can scan your regular Kroger *Plus* card (or input your phone number) every time you shop, and FEAT gets credit!

FEAT recently received a \$550 donation from Kroger based on our percentage of total donations the past year. **Please make FEAT-Houston the designated charity of your choice** then pass this bar code along to friends and relatives and encourage them to do the same. **Your support of FEAT-Houston in this way is much appreciated!**

If you are a **Randalls, Safeway or Albertson's** shopper (or even if you have relatives in other parts of the country that shop at these stores), be sure to check with the cashier or customer service desk to designate FEAT (Charity #2510) as your designated charity partner.

To Re-Enroll in Kroger's Neighbor to Neighbor Donation Program:

Present the **barcode** below to your cashier upon checkout. After they have scanned your KrogerPlus Card you will be enrolled for the current year of the Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor Donation Program. Every time you shop at Kroger and use your enrolled KrogerPlus Card, Kroger will contribute a percentage of your eligible purchases to the Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor Donation fund. Once a card is scanned with the barcode, it will be active for the remainder of the program year.

FAMILIES FOR EFFECTIVE AUTISM TREATMENT
HOUSTON



Kroger cashier: Please scan customer's KrogerPlus Card at the beginning of the order, and then scan the above barcode. The customer's KrogerPlus Card is now enrolled in the Kroger Neighbor to Neighbor Donation Program.

Would you like to support FEAT-Houston? Your contributions assist FEAT-Houston in its mission to provide information about applied behavior analysis (ABA) and to promote ABA treatment resources in the Greater Houston area. Send donations to: FEAT-Houston, 1120 Medical Plaza Dr., Suite 100, The Woodlands, TX 77380.

Make & Take Fun

Keeping Kids Engaged: Folder Games & Activity Schedules

Busy parents and teachers often find it difficult to keep children and teens with autism engaged when their backs are turned tending to other kids or tasks. Christie Enzinna, BCBA, of ABA Professional Services offered a primer on activity schedules and engaging activities at the FEAT-Houston Clear Lake Chapter's "Make & Take" meeting Monday, June 21st.

Parents and teachers listened to Enzinna's talk as they put together the games and activities with materials that included beads, pipe cleaners, plastic eating utensils, doll's hair barrettes, ice trays for sorting, fuzz balls, plastic straws, wooden clothes pins and golf tees for counting and number matching, and more. (For folder games up to fourth grade, check out books and CDs by Carson /Dellosa at www.carsondellosa.com and My File Folder Games www.myffgames.com or make your own by clipping photos from newspaper s and magazines).



Enzinna noted that keeping kids with autism engaged is a "quality of life issue" with activities providing skill practice, enjoyment and the opportunity to be busy when everyone else is doing something as well. The challenge, she said, is to teach them step-by-step to complete activities, letting them become proficient at each part of the task with practice.



Immediate reinforcement is often needed as children learn an activity before it becomes reinforcing in itself, said Enzinna. Token or "penny boards" can provide flexible reinforcement systems that allow a child to use their pennies to select a reward that appeals to them by the time they've earned it.

When a child has learned to complete a number of activities independently, the activities can be depicted in a simple activity schedule or activity book in a 1" binder that has photos of each activity inserted in flippable pages ending with a photo of a reinforcer/reward. Include a photo prompt to set a timer (e.g. 5 minutes) for activities without an obvious ending.

Activity books can provide for increasingly extended periods of independent activity for the child or teen.

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Types of activities that are easily included are matching, sorting, listening to music, social games or individualized sports activities (bicycling, treadmill). Depending on the level of the child's or adult's abilities, matching can be as simple as colors or more complicated, such as matching sports to local teams or stars (a socially important topic!). Organizing might be sorting silverware or folding and putting away towels. *Activity Schedules for Children with Autism* (McLannahan & Krantz; \$16.95) is a good guide to implementing activity schedules.

Enzinna advised parents and teachers to schedule time each day to teach and practice activities and sample activities to see what appeals to a child over time. To overcome inappropriate behavior, keep initial sessions short and always end on a good note (before behavior deteriorates).

To contact Enzinna for copies of her protocols on teaching Activity Books and Penny Boards or for her handout on Paying Attention to Your Child's Good Behavior, email: christie@abaprofessionals.com.

Upcoming Conferences & Events

PECS Advanced Training – Sept. 2-3, San Antonio. Presented by Pyramid Educational Consultants. This workshop is those who have attended the PECS Basic Training and currently implementing PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System). Call 888-732-7462. www.pecsusa.com/workshopcat.php?id=9

2010 Autism Society National Conference & Exposition - The National Conference of the Autism Society addresses a range of issues, including early intervention, education, employment, behavior, communication, and social skills across the lifespan. It is open to families, professionals & individuals affected by autism. July 7-10, Dallas, Hyatt Regency. www.autism-society.org.

Shape It Training Series: August 29, Heights, "New School Year, New Faces – Helping the school-aged child with social skills and reciprocal language. Check the Shape of Behavior website for details: www.shapeofbehavior.com.



Social Media Heroine

Stargate Universe Fan Earns \$500 Donation

With fingers flying, long-time FEAT-Houston supporter and parent Hilda Bowen recently garnered a \$500 donation from her Twitter friend Frith O'Brien of Florida.

In April, [Lou Diamond Phillips](#) tweeted to his followers that he was going to be at the [Dallas International Film Festival](#) to premiere his new movie, "[Transparency](#)." Dallas is so close to Houston, that Hilda, a big fan of his brief Stargate Universe television series, decided to attend – if she could get childcare for her son with autism!

She tweeted that she'd be there, and Lou replied: "I'll make it worth your while! BTW if anyone does say hi, pls let me know that we're Twitter buddies. We'll Twit Pic! Big D on 16th!"

Hilda's Twitter buddy Frith O'Brien of Santa Rosa Beach, Florida, pledged \$500 to a charity of her choice if Hilda could actually obtain a picture with him at the festival.

"The inspiration for my donation was a combination of events and inspirations... you and my best friend Maggie, whose son also has autism, and for purely selfish reasons- jealousy that I could not make it," writes O'Brien.

Lou has been on the Board of Directors of Autism Care and Treatment (ACT – Today!), a California autism support organization, since 2005. So, aside from the logistics of meeting up with him (he recognized her from her photo avatar!), he was happy to fulfill Hilda's photo request!

Thanks to Hilda for her social media creativity, to Lou Diamond Phillips for his cooperation in staging the photo, and especially Frith O'Brien for her wonderful donation supporting families with children with autism!

Families for Effective Autism Treatment
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InKids Expands Program to Include Middle/High School

Including Kids, Inc., a private program in Humble, Texas that uses applied behavioral techniques (ABA) to teach individuals with autism spectrum disorders is expanding its program beginning August 16, 2010 to include a school for middle and high school students. The program will teach functional academics and meaningful life skills through nature and personal exploration by educating students in the community and classes that emphasize academics, technology, leisure (nature-based/outdoors), sports, chores, social skills and self-advocacy, gardening, vocational skills, and home economics. The goal is to provide an age-appropriate setting for students on the autism spectrum to prepare for their next step in life. For information on student ratios, tuition, admission, insurance, elective fees and more, contact admission.intervention@includingkids.org.

Note: FEAT-Houston News occasionally includes information on private programs that address a need in the community that is not widely met, including ABA programs that fulfill specialized needs for summer programming or childcare and/or programs for ages that many programs are not supporting.

FEAT-Houston Email List

If you would like to receive a link to this newsletter by email or announcements of meetings, workshops, trainings or other items of interest to people who support children, teens and adults with autism, sign up for the FEAT-Houston email list at our website at www.feathouston.org or send your email request to feathouston@yahoo.com.