

Why Early Intervention ABA Therapy Results in a Better Outcome for Your Child



Opya offers early intervention, ABA therapy services to children in the following areas:

Northern California:

- Greater Sacramento Area
 - Sacramento County
 - Placer County
 - Yolo County
 - El Dorado County
- Central Valley
 - San Joaquin County
 - Stanislaus County
- San Francisco Bay Area
 - Alameda County
 - Contra Costa County
 - San Mateo County
 - Solano County

Southern California:

- Orange County
 - Los Angeles County
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If your toddler or preschooler was recently diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) you may have a lot of questions. Some of your questions may be about the term “early intervention.” Maybe a pediatrician or child psychologist recommended that you seek “early intervention” care, or you have read about it online. But you still have questions about what it is and how it works. If so, read on.

At Opya, we help hundreds of children with ASD each day using early intervention care, which includes therapies that start as soon as your toddler or preschooler is diagnosed with ASD. Starting care as soon as possible after your child is diagnosed can be the best thing you do for your child. Early diagnosis and early treatment lead to better outcomes. In this article, we explain:

1. WHAT EARLY INTERVENTION CARE MEANS
2. SHARE THE RESEARCH BEHIND IT
3. EXPLAIN THE BENEFITS EARLY INTERVENTION THERAPIES CAN PROVIDE FOR YOUR CHILD

Early intervention means starting care at an early age

As the phrase suggests, early intervention care means starting treatment and therapy for developmentally challenged children as early as 18 months old to help them overcome these challenges and work toward meeting important development milestones. Treatments typically last for two to three years and should be tailored to meet a child’s specific needs and goals.



Starting early can make a huge difference

Today, one in 36 children are diagnosed with ASD. As the rate of autism diagnoses has increased, so has the research designed to find solutions that reduce the impact of autism on children so that they can live their best life.

Most professionals agree that early intervention childhood care for autism is essential because of the concept of “neuroplasticity,” which is the ability of a person’s brain to form new connections that help it develop as the person learns based on experiences. Our brains develop the most in the earliest years of life, and it is no different for children with developmental challenges. So, the earlier we can identify and start care for developmentally challenged children, the better chance they have to learn, grow, and succeed.

Early childhood therapy can dramatically improve a child’s overall development. Children who receive autism-specific care at early and key developmental stages are much more likely to learn essential social skills and achieve better outcomes.

When therapy starts at an early age, the child’s family benefits too. The education and training that we provide to our families gives them the skills they need to help their children when the therapist is not with them, so they can improve in all aspects of their lives, including behaviorally, mentally, and emotionally.

Hear Chloe’s story

To bring this home, let’s take one of our recent patients, Chloe, as an example. We met her soon after she was diagnosed with ASD at two years old, and her family had many concerns related to her overall development, specifically her lack of communication and the repetitive behaviors she was exhibiting. She was not speaking, did not interact with family members and threw tantrums quite frequently, all of which were negatively impacting her relationships with family members.

We enrolled Chloe in 35 hours a week of productive, early intervention ABA therapy in the natural environment of her home and set goals across all areas of her development with a primary focus on coping skills, communication, and practical skills such as eating, dressing, hygiene, play, increasing the number of words in her vocabulary, following instructions, and responding to her name. Our Opya therapist, who is specially trained to care for young children, worked closely with Chloe and her family on a care plan and collaborated with other specialists on the care team to support Chloe’s growth.

After six months of our ABA therapy, personalized to Chloe’s individual needs, Chloe has made huge advances in all areas of development and her family has learned how to teach new skills and respond appropriately during challenging moments. She is now speaking, responds to her name more frequently, says her grandma’s name and gives hugs to family members. She can use a fork to feed herself and her family is now able to go out to dinner together. And the frequency and duration of her tantrums have been reduced dramatically because she’s learned better coping skills. Chloe is gaining the appropriate skills to be enrolled in a school setting, and her family can participate in many of the activities they love, resulting in a closer bond.

For us, that's what it is all about. The Opya Way means personalized early intervention ABA therapy for your child and family, provided in the comfort and security of your home, which helps your child reach their full potential so they can graduate to the next phase of their development - elementary school.

Consistent care and frequent reinforcement are key

Another term that is commonly used is "Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention" (shortened to EIBI), which is based on the proven concept that care should be provided early and often to best support skill development, reinforce positive behaviors, and minimize negative behaviors. Frequent reinforcement helps young brains learn more quickly and the learnings last longer. The therapy is broken up into small steps that are more manageable for the child so that the child is not overwhelmed and can master one set of skills at a time. In addition, EIBI also helps children focus their attention, improve their ability to understand conversations, talk more, and work on their daily living skills.

There are two main characteristics of early intervention programs designed for children with ASD: the intensity of the program and the age at which children begin the program. Most early intervention programs involve about 30 hours of therapy per week to provide the greatest impact of the therapy and optimize outcomes for each child.

ABA is the preferred early intervention therapy

At Opya, we utilize Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), which is the most used and effective early intervention autism therapy. While ABA therapy can be given at any age, for it to be considered "early intervention" it typically starts between eighteen months and four years old and can be done at home, at school, or in the community. ABA, which teaches skills that are

useful in everyday life, is a proven scientific treatment that involves many techniques for understanding and changing behavior based on insights into how behaviors affect and are affected by different environments and situations.

ABA therapy focuses on "antecedents" and "consequences." The antecedents are the events that lead up to a behavior, while the consequences are what happens after the behavior occurs. Therapists spend a great deal of time focusing on both the antecedents and consequences when they apply ABA therapy.

There are five main ways ABA therapy helps children:

1. Increases desirable behaviors, such as playing with others or paying attention to another person while they are speaking.
2. Teaches new skills, including fine motor skills like using a pencil to write and daily living skills such as brushing teeth and washing hands.
3. Continuously reinforces and builds the skills the child is developing, like those daily life tasks.
4. Applies what has been learned to new environments and situations like preschool and kindergarten.
5. Minimizes unwanted behaviors such as physical aggression, self-harm, or tantrums, which interfere with the daily life of child and family.

Studies have shown that children diagnosed with autism who receive early intervention ABA therapy have a much greater chance of building life-long developmental skills such as communication, spoken language, and social skills.

Research supports starting care at an early age

In a recent survey, 98% of medical professionals including pediatricians, child psychiatrists, child psychologists and developmental pediatricians agreed that early intervention treatment for ASD is important.

In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that all children be screened for ASD at ages 18 and 24 months, along with regular developmental screenings. The AAP specifically says that toddlers “should be referred for diagnostic evaluation when increased risk for developmental disorders, including ASD, is identified through screening and/or surveillance.” And to emphasize the importance they place on early intervention, the AAP goes on to say that “children should be referred for intervention for all identified developmental delays at the time of identification and not wait for an ASD diagnostic evaluation to take place.”



Most published research points to early intervention therapy as the best way to help children with autism. In fact, several scientific studies found that EIBI may result in large gains in development and reductions in the need for special services in the future.

In one example, researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found that when preschoolers get early intervention care, the resulting improvements in communication, daily functioning, social skills, and other developmental areas were quite large. Other researchers found that children who enter programs

at younger ages make greater gains than those who enter programs at older ages.

The practical outcomes of early intervention

Based on Opya’s years of caring for young children and their families, we decided to focus on early intervention therapy because it has been proven to result in better outcomes. We see our clients achieve major milestones every day as they progress and grow. Two of the most important practical outcomes of early intervention ABA therapy that we strive for are getting your child prepared for elementary school and becoming more independent.

GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL

One of the main benefits of early intervention is that it provides your child with the unique opportunity to make great developmental strides before they enter a school setting. Our care is specifically designed to help your child be prepared for and thrive in elementary school. For example, some of the skills necessary for school that we emphasize are communication, play skills, sharing, and taking turns. We also work on fine motor skills that will be used in a school setting such as writing and drawing with pencils and markers and using utensils during lunchtime.

BECOMING MORE INDEPENDENT

With the behavior therapies that we offer, the other primary goal is to help your child become more independent. Providing the tools that your child needs to become more independent looks different in each child based on their unique needs.

In this area, goals may include becoming more independent with daily living tasks, increasing spoken communication skills, using augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) devices, increasing play skills, and decreasing negative behaviors.

Every child is different, and you should speak to your pediatrician or child psychologist about what they believe makes the most sense for your child. With an early intervention ABA therapy program that is custom built for your child's needs, and parent and family education and training so you can support your child when the therapist is not there, your child can thrive and reach his or her development goals and lead their best life.

If you are interested in exploring early intervention ABA therapy with Opya, please call 888.300.OPYA (6792).



Need more info, or ready to schedule an assessment?
Call 888.300.OPYA (6792) | Email info@opyacare.com | Visit www.opyacare.com



Discover Opya

Opya specializes in personalized, in-home early intervention autism therapy services including ABA, speech, and occupational therapies for newly diagnosed children under 6-years old. Our connected care model results in a high level of communication and collaboration between parents and clinicians that makes parents' lives easier and empowers our therapists to provide more effective care.