

THERAPY
SPOT



Autism Services
Handbook



Introduction

Therapy Spot offers services to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder from infancy to 18 years of age. We offer one on one service with a Speech-Language Pathologist, BCBA, Instructor Therapist, and Communicative Disorders Assistants, as well as group programs. At Therapy Spot, services for individuals with Autism all fall under the name GABA. GABA (Gestalt Applied Behavioural Analysis) is the unique brand of treatment offered at Therapy Spot, developed by a team of specialized professionals in the fields of Speech-Language Pathology and Behaviour Analysis. Therapy Spot offers a number of GABA services depending on developmental level, and cognitive and social profile of your child. These services include:

- GABA First Steps
- GABA Academy
- GABA Kinder
- GABA Junior
- GABA Senior
- GABA With Friends
- GABA Parent Coaching

Once you receive an assessment at Therapy Spot, our clinicians will analyze the data and recommend the types of services most appropriate for your child.

This handbook will provide you with information on each of these programs and the steps and procedures for getting support at Therapy Spot.

Please take time to read each page and if you have any additional questions do not hesitate to get in touch with us at: 416-546-3044

Thank you for considering us. We continue to make incredible gains with the



children we treat and we know that with your support we can produce the same results with your child.

What is GABA?

GABA (Gestalt Applied Behavioural Analysis) is the unique brand of treatment offered at Therapy Spot, developed by a team of specialized professionals in the fields of Speech-Language Pathology and Behaviour Analysis.

Our multidisciplinary team includes Speech-Language Pathologists, a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (certified in the Early Start Denver Model), Communication Disorders Assistants and Instructor Therapists.

With years of combined knowledge, we have created a comprehensive program, designed to target all areas of development including: receptive and expressive communication, joint attention, play skills, cognitive skills, fine and gross motor, imitation, social skills, personal independence and behaviour.

The GABA program uses a number of evidence-based treatment approaches including, but not limited to, the Early Start Denver Model, ABLLS-R, and VB-MAPP. We combine a number of best practice approaches for treating children diagnosed with ASD and/or other developmental language delays.



Why choose GABA?

Therapy Spot therapists are trained in the Early Start Denver Model, a naturalistic intervention for young children with Autism derived from the principles of ABA and Speech-Language Pathology. Our team uses a multidisciplinary approach taken from the schools of:

- ESDM (EARLY START DENVER MODEL)
- PROMPT (PROMPTS FOR RESTRUCTURING OF ORAL MOTOR PHONETIC TARGETS)
- PECS (PICTURE EXCHANGE)
- SOCIAL STORIES
- HANEN MORE THAN WORDS
- ASL (AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE)
- SOS (SEQUENTIAL ORAL SENSORY FEEDING)
- ZONES OF REGULATION



Features of GABA:

1. Transdisciplinary model (SLP, BCBA, Certified ESDM Specialist)
2. Includes specific programs related to speech (since 65% of children with autism have apraxia)
3. Incorporates a social program with other children their age
4. Incorporates behaviour programs and tracking
5. Incorporates sensory integration programming
6. Incorporates sensory profile assessment
7. Incorporates sensory diet programming
8. We ensure concurrent generalization (with multiple therapists and multiple environments)

GABA for ESDM Levels 1-2

GABA First Steps

GABA First Steps is your child's first exposure to structured programming where their developmental skills will be targeted. Treatment options include individual 1-on-1 sessions with an Instructor Therapist and one or more sessions per week with a Speech-Language Pathologist and/or BCBA to focus on early communication, cognitive, play, motor and behaviour skills.

GABA Academy

GABA Academy is a small group program that uses the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) therapy approach, and is offered weekday mornings for a duration of 1.5 hours per session. The program is suited to learners who have successfully completed or are progressing adequately in GABA First Steps (level 1-2 ESDM) and thus are showing emerging social and group readiness skills. Run by our Clinical Director of Autism Services, and a Speech-Language Pathologist, GABA Social has a ratio of 2 children to 1 therapist and is capped at a capacity of 4 children per session.

Goals of GABA Academy:

- Follow daily routines and learning transitions independently
- Participate independently in small group activities
- Communicate intentionally with peers and adults in a group environment
- Engage in purposeful play and appropriate use of objects
- Develop personal independence in managing belongings, daily living, and safety skills (e.g., put away coats and backpacks, clear cup and plate after meal, put away toys, dressing, handwashing, toileting, eating)
- Interact spontaneously with peers and adults
- Expand developmental skills in all areas
- Acquire the needed skills to participate in the next learning environment, GABA Kinder



GABA for ESDM Levels 3-4

GABA Kinder

Children will be entered into GABA Kinder once they have reached level 3 of the ESDM developmental assessment. Treatment options include individual 1-on-1 sessions with an Instructor Therapist, Speech-Language Pathologist, or BCBA, as well as small group intervention. The focus of intervention will be on all areas of development (i.e., receptive and expressive communication, play, fine and gross motor, social skills, cognitive skills, personal independence and behaviour). Our small group intervention includes:

- **GABA Kinder:** with its ratio of 1 therapist to 2 children, is offered weekday mornings for a duration of 4 hours per session.
- **GABA Kinder Express:** with its ratio of 1 therapist to 2 children, is offered weekday afternoons for a duration of 2 hours per session.
- **GABA Play:** offered weekday afternoons following GABA Kinder. A 1.5 hour group facilitating unstructured play.

GABA for Graduates of ESDM Level 4

GABA Junior

GABA Junior is a transition program designed for children who have nearly completed level 4 ESDM goals and/or are of school age, but may not be ready for a 6.5 hour structured school program. The program runs for 4 hours from 9am-1pm and focuses on developing behavioural readiness for structured desk-based tasks. This program uses ABLLS-R (Assessment of Basic Learning



and Language Skills), and incorporates aspects from your child's IEP to develop an individualized program. The program is delivered in a small group setting with a ratio of 1 therapist to 2 children and transitions children from play-based activities to structured desk-based tasks.

GABA Senior

Our GABA Senior program is designed for children who have graduated from GABA Junior or have graduated from GABA Kinder and are behaviourally ready for a 6.5 hour day. The program focuses on developing a strong foundation for academic and social success as your child transitions into school. This program uses ABLLS-R, the Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills, and incorporates aspects from your child's school IEP to develop an individualized program delivered in a small group setting. This is a 6.5 hour structured program that focuses on cognitive and social development and runs from 9am-3:30pm with a ratio of 1 therapist to 3 children.

GABA With Friends

GABA With Friends includes a number of small social skills groups offered at Therapy Spot for varying ages. Groups meet once per week for 1.5 hours, and focus on developing social skills, social self-awareness, and self-regulation skills.

Level 1: Age 6-8

This small group works on learning to control emotions and interact with other children in a friendly manner by understanding feelings and using sensory strategies to stay calm. The program uses the award winning social thinking programs: *We Thinkers! Volumes 1 and 2 Social Explorers*, *Think Social!*, and the *Zones of Regulation*, which utilize social stories, songs, charts and games in learning exercises.

Level 2: Ages 8-12

Social communication goes beyond talking and words. It involves using nonverbal behaviour (eye gaze, facial expression, gestures and body language) to tell others what you want and how you feel, and to understand what others want and feel. By gaining understanding of the unspoken rules of conversation, participants will work on becoming successful communicators in this small group.

Level 3: Ages 12 and up

A small group that works on learning life skills that may include, but are not limited to, taking public transportation, navigating road safety, communicating with vendors in the community, and internet safety, and may include local outings at an additional cost. This group follows the AFLS (Assessment of Functional Living Skills) curriculum and will require the completion of an assessment as a prerequisite to joining in order to ensure proper placement.

GABA Parent Coaching

If you are a parent who feels could benefit from coaching on specific topics to provide your child with therapeutic support outside the clinic, then parent coaching is designed for you. Therapy Spot offers a treatment program for parents where the sessions aim to allow the parent to reach mastery of chosen skills under the guidance of our ESDM Certified parent coach.

- Parent coaching includes 12 weekly therapy sessions that last 1 hour each week
- Parents are active in the sessions and are asked to play and interact with their children while being “coached” on the strategies
- Once a strategy is achieved and the parent feels confident, the topic will change and the parent will be coached on the next strategy. Coaching and guidance is provided to ensure that the parent and child are moving along in their treatment goals

Scheduling your child for GABA

To schedule your child for GABA please contact our office to request the days you would like and we will endeavour to meet your needs. If the group has not reached its minimum registration requirements of two children or is full, your child will be placed on a wait-list for the days requested and when a spot becomes available, we will contact you.

GABA Costing

BCBA SERVICES	\$154/HR
ABA SERVICES	\$55/HR
SLP SERVICES	\$142/HR

Attending GABA Groups

What to bring to GABA:

- Change of Clothes (shoes, socks, underwear, shirt, pants, etc.)
- Diapers and wipes (if your child is not toilet trained)
- Weather dependent items (Summer - sunscreen, sun hat etc. / Winter - mittens, hat, snowpants, winter jacket, boots etc.).
- Morning Snack
- Lunch (for full day programs)
- Water Bottle

Pick Up Policy:

Please be sure to pick up your child promptly at the end of each GABA session. Charges for late child pick up will be billed at the therapist's hourly rate (\$55/hr) to account for their time.





More About ESDM...

What is ESDM?

The Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) is an intervention model that incorporates ABA principles, Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI) and naturalistic teaching. It uses a comprehensive developmental and behavioural intervention framework for the assessment and treatment of young children with ASD.

Goals are derived from assessing the child's developmental skills and treatment is provided using the principles of ABA, Pivotal Response Training (PRT), Hanen "More Than Words", PECS, Prompt, Direct Floortime, and more.

ESDM views ASD as a complex disorder affecting all areas of functioning and therefore believes it requires an interdisciplinary approach (Psychology, Speech-Language Pathology, BCBA, Occupational Therapy, etc). Teaching can occur inside typical family routines to target all areas of development, such as meals, bathing, playtime, chores, community outings, etc.

How much ESDM is required?

Based on research findings, ideally 4-5 hours of intensive ESDM x 5 days per week (i.e., 20- 25 hours per week) over a two year period can produce improvements in:

- IQ
- Language
- Adaptive Behaviours
- Normalized Brain Activity on EEG

The Research...

A randomized controlled clinical trial of ESDM was conducted by Dawson and Colleagues out of the University of Washington and published in the Journal of Paediatrics in 2009. Dawson, Rogers and colleagues recruited 48 children with autism aged between 18 and 30 months old, and divided them into two groups.

One group received 25 hours a week of intervention following the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) for two years (comprising 20 hours per week delivered by specialists from the university, plus 5 hours per week of parent-delivered therapy). The other group of children underwent therapy in community-based programs.

At the start of the study period there was no substantial difference in functioning between the groups. Both groups were similar in their severity of autism symptoms, gender, IQ, and socioeconomic status.

The results showed that:

- Compared to the children who participated in community-based intervention, the children in the ESDM group showed significant improvements in IQ, adaptive behaviour and autism diagnosis
- Two years after starting the intervention, the ESDM children on average improved 17.6 standard score points compared with 7.0 points in the community-intervention group, relative to their baseline scores
- The ESDM group also showed significant improvement in receptive language (listening and understanding) compared to the community-based group
- Seven of the children in the ESDM group had enough improvement in overall skill to warrant a change in diagnosis from autism to the milder condition known as “pervasive developmental disorder, not otherwise specified”.



The researchers concluded that the findings underscored “the importance of early detection of and intervention in autism”, emphasizing the importance of a relationship-based approach to learning with many learning opportunities embedded into play (Rogers, 2010). Parental involvement and use of learning strategies at home during routine and daily activities are also important ingredients of the success of the program (Dawson, 2010). In a 2012 follow up study, Dawson and colleagues showed that this same ESDM group showed normalized EEG brain activity, demonstrating that early intervention using the ESDM model alters the trajectory of brain development.

References:

Dawson, G., & Rogers, S., et al., (2010). Randomized, Controlled Trial of an Intervention for Toddlers With Autism: The Early Start Denver Model. *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 125(1), 17-23.

Dawson, G., et al., (2012). Early Behavioral Intervention Is Associated With Normalized Brain Activity in Young Children With Autism. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 51(11), 1150-1159.

Contact us today!

We hope you found this handbook helpful. If you would like to schedule an assessment to join our GABA program please contact our office at

416-546-3044 or email office@therapyspot.ca

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1232 Dufferin St,
Toronto, ON M6H 4C3