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## Professional-Consumer Partnership

*Jennica Nill, Consumer Representative to the BACB Board of Directors*

It's been five years since our youngest was diagnosed with a lifelong neurological disability. It was devastating feeling vulnerable and incapable; we didn't know what to do, where to go, who to trust. We have been through many service providers and schools in our short experience, but nothing has made more of a positive impact on our quality of life than becoming educated consumers of Applied Behavior Analysis.

Having the motivation to learn as much as you can about how to help your child isn't enough. Most consumers are simply too overwhelmed with the responsibilities or the grieving process of learning their child's life is going to be challenging. Many lack access to the appropriate resources or have received training and information that is less than adequate or accurate. When there is lack of progress or behaviors get worse, they claim ABA "doesn't work", the individual being treated isn't capable, or that they have been harmed by ABA. While their experiences may be true, publicly sharing their misunderstandings that it is the fault of the science rather than incompetence in application, lack of analysis, or perhaps the absence of appropriate follow through on behalf of the consumer is a significant problem.

I would not have known, or taken the initiative to learn that ABA is not only discrete trials training or a complex set of procedures if it weren't for the strong, steady support of two sources: local parents who advocate for ABA, and two extraordinary professionals that also happen to have, among other things, their BACB certification.

As Behavior Analysts, your communication, support, and encouragement to the consumers you help can tremendously influence their understanding, choices, and inspire how they are involved. The importance of this interdependent relationship between the incredible work of professionals who care and the families and self advocates who have benefited is, in my opinion, underestimated. The following suggestions may help facilitate collaboration, inspiration, and understanding when working directly with consumers:

- We need a lot of support from other consumers whose lives have benefited from ABA. Become aware of parent-run organizations that responsibly disseminate scientifically validated



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information and refer consumers to them or connect parents with others who are willing to offer support.

- To ensure carryover and avoid potential misunderstandings, put it in writing. Having a record of concerns or proposals discussed during consultations and reviewing them at the end of the meeting will facilitate clear communication.

- At meetings, address parents by their name, Mr. and Mrs.-it gives them equality and respect, do not address them as Mom or Dad

- Encourage consumers to attend professional conferences. A huge turning point was when I began learning from professionals through video, data, and intense full day conferences and was treated like an equal along side my son's teachers and other professionals.

- Whether working directly with consumers, or presenting at a workshop, consider at some point referring them to the BACB website [www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com) to raise awareness that certification exists and to learn about the different credentialing levels and consumer rights.

- Some consumers assume that just because someone is certified they are appropriate for any challenge. Help them to understand, that just as any other profession, board certification only lets the consumer know that someone has the minimal competencies necessary.

- Many learn about ABA through other consumers' experiences; often choosing procedures, practitioners, or a packaged approach based on anything other than published data.

This has caused much disagreement and confusion. When consumers want to know what is "best", help them understand that ABA serves a very diverse population and that they need to understand the principles of ABA. If they have a strong foundation in the principles, there are many possibilities for what is "best" for their individual unique needs.

- Damage control – If you see ABA or a practitioner being unfairly attacked in public by consumers or other professionals, consider correcting them with appropriate resources. Admittedly, there have been times (and there always will be) when I needed to be corrected. I am thankful to those who said something to help me learn and understand.

Thank you for this opportunity to share some thoughts about the professional/consumer partnership.

*Jennica Nill is a stay-at-home mom. Her youngest son was diagnosed with Autism in 2001 at the age of 21 months. For the past four years, she has dedicated herself to becoming an educated consumer and advocate of applied behavior analysis through networking with parents and professionals, attending workshops on behavior analysis and autism, and writing informational literature for consumers and educators. Mrs. Nill is a 2004 graduate of the Partners in Policymaking program, "an innovative national model of leadership training for people with developmental disabilities, parents and family members". She applied this advocacy training in providing testimony before New York State officials and committees in support of behavior analysis and the recognition of BACB certifications. Jennica is serving her second year as consumer representative for the leadership of the New York State Association for Behavior Analysis.*



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- The BACB gave its first computer-based examination this December. The second computer-based administration of BACB exams is currently in progress. The third computer-based administration is scheduled to take place August 7 through August 27.
- The examination was taken in 84 different locations within 31 US States. Thirteen of those were states where a BACB examination had never been given before.
- The examination was taken in two international locations: London and Toronto. Many more international sites will be available for the March examination.
- The BACB Board of Directors voted to make the change in recertification and renewal deadlines a permanent one. From now on, all recertification and renewals must be postmarked no later than 15 days prior to the expiration date on the certificate (June 15 for certificates expiring June 30 and December 16 for certificates expiring December 31).
- The BACB has approved 115 course sequences within 85 universities, with 17 of these course sequences being offered in universities outside the United States.
- The members of the BACB Board of Directors have changed a number of times since the inception of the program. The founding members of the Board of Directors were:
  - Jon Bailey
  - Michael Hemingway
  - James Johnston
  - Catherine Maurice (consumer representative)
  - Gerald Shook
- The current members of the Board of Directors are:
  - Gina Green
  - Joel Hundert
  - James Johnston
  - Jose Martinez-Diaz
  - Jennica Nill (consumer representative)
  - James Partington
  - Raymond Romanczyk
  - Gerald Shook
  - Haydee Toro
  - Cherish Twigg (BCABA representative)



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# News and Notes

*Gerald Shook, PhD, BCBA*  
*BACB Executive Director*

## **Director Election Results**

We are pleased to announce that over 1,100 of you voted in the 2006 director elections. The following individuals were elected to the BACB Board of Directors: [Ray Romanczyk, Ph.D., BCBA](#); [Judy Favell, Ph.D., BCBA](#); and [Crystal Harms, M.Ed., BCABA](#). All were elected to a three-year term of office that begins following the BACB Board of Directors' Meeting in May. Ray has served the BACB as a director for the past three years and was re-elected to a second three-year term (directors may serve only two consecutive three-year terms). Judy and Crystal begin their first terms in May. You can get to know the new directors better by clicking on their names above or by clicking on their names in the list of directors on the About BACB page of BACB.com.

## **Congratulations Cherish**

BCABA representative on the Board of Directors, Cherish Twigg, recently completed the eligibility requirements and passed the BCBA examination. Although we always are delighted when BCABAs are motivated to seek a higher level of certification and become BCBA's, in this instance we find the circumstances to be bitter-sweet. Although Cherish remains a BCABA, she is now also a BCBA which, because of a possible conflict of interest, precludes her from retaining the BCABA director chair. We would like to thank Cherish for her fine service and dedication to the BACB and wish her success in her new career as a BCBA. The remaining few months of Cherish's term will be filled by BCABA director-elect Crystal Harms.

## **Recognition of BACB Certifications**

BACB certifications are becoming recognized by governments and insurance companies as meaningful and legitimate credentials, and these agencies are funding certificants to provide behavior analysis services with varying types of consumers and in rapidly increasing numbers. Although we are pleased with these developments, we recognize that BACB credentials are not universally accepted and that we will need to work together to remedy that situation. For the past

several years, I have attended dozens of state, regional, national, and international conferences; presenting sessions on the BACB and consulting with local certificants on how to increase credential recognition in their areas (please contact the BACB if you wish to have BACB presentations at your conference). In addition to these activities, we have expanded our efforts in two new areas.

The BACB and the Professional Affairs Committee of the Association for Behavior Analysis (chaired by Tom Zane, Ph.D., BCBA) have undertaken a joint initiative to increase the recognition of BACB credentials. We plan to develop mechanisms to coordinate information on certificate recognition and funding sources between various states' and countries' behavior analysis organizations. In addition, we plan to develop and support training efforts directed toward strategies these organizations might employ to increase credential recognition in their areas.

In addition, the BACB has contracted with Sam Bell to provide consultation toward increasing international credential recognition. Mr. Bell has considerable experience in governmental affairs and has consulted in this area for several years. Previously, he served as State Representative where he held key positions in the Florida House including Majority Leader. Mr. Bell earned his bachelors' degree at Dartmouth and his law degree from Duke. We look forward working with Mr. Bell and will keep you apprised of our efforts.

## **BACB Development Outside of the United States**

This past September I accepted an invitation to present at the European Association for Behavior Analysis meeting held in Gdansk, Poland. It is a wonderful professional group and there was considerable interest in BACB certification at the meeting. Over the months following the meeting we have approved BCBA course sequences at the University of Wales at Swansea (contact: Simon Dymond, Ph.D., BCBA); the Warsaw School of Social Psychology



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in Poland (contact: Monika Suchowierska, Ph.D., BCBA); and the University of Ulster Coleraine in Northern Ireland (contact: Denis O'Hora, Ph.D., BCBA). We expect to be approving several more course sequences in Europe within the next few months. By the way, I would like to extend my appreciation to Dr. Suchowierska for being such a gracious host whilst I was in her interesting and historical country.

I also was pleased to accept an invitation from the Ontario Association for Behavior Analysis to present at their Toronto conference in November. We are in the final stages of developing examination qualification methods that will reflect their current university education model. We hope to have multiple Ontario universities with approved course sequences within a year. Development of BACB certification outside of the United States is important to all certificants and the field of behavior analysis and we will be discussing the multiple reasons for this in future articles and presentations.

### **Renewal and Recertification Deadline Reminders**

The BACB will now be providing reminders of your renewal and recertification deadlines via email and letters delivered by the US Postal Service. In the past we have sent reminders via email and post cards as efficient and cost efficient methods. As more aggressive (but often unreliable) anti-spam programs are being used by internet providers and email users, we suspect that some of our reminders may have been intercepted before they reached certificants. In addition, we also suspect that post cards sent to certificants may have been lost in route or were easily misplaced by certificants when they received them. We will still use email as our primary means of communication for many things so please ensure that we always have your correct email address and that you have listed BACB.com has a safe sender in your anti-spam program.

### **Certificant Survey**

We want to hear from you! The Behavior Analyst Certification Board will be conducting an online certificant survey to look at the following:

- We are interested in updating the demographic profile of our certificants

in order to answer questions about who we are, the settings in which certificants practice, and other information that may be of benefit to employers of behavior analysts, consumers and those considering a career in our field.

- We are considering developing advanced specialty certifications for BCBAs who practice in the areas of autism and other developmental disabilities and seek you input on these and other possible areas.

- We are interested in how you feel about your contact and interactions with the BACB and how we might refine our services.

- Certificants will be awarded 1 hour of Type 5 continuing education credit for completing this survey.

### **Saul Axelrod Is Named Hemingway Award Recipient**

We are pleased to announce that the BACB has named Saul Axelrod, Ph.D., BCBA as the inaugural recipient of the Michael J. Hemingway Award. Saul will receive the award at the Association for Behavior Analysis convention in Atlanta this May. The award is presented in memory of the late Michael Hemingway who was a founding director of the BACB and made critical contributions to its initial success. The BACB extends its appreciation to Drs. Haydee Toro and Greg Wagner for their participation on the Hemingway Awards Committee.

### **Welcome Christine Ratcliff**

We are pleased to have Christine Ratcliff, M.S., BCBA join the BACB as its Chief Operating Officer, moving from her part-time position to full-time. Christine did her undergraduate work in behavior analysis at Western Michigan and is finishing her Ph.D. in behavior analysis with certificant Jon Bailey at Florida State. Christine is familiar to Florida certificants for her fine work coordinating many aspects of the 1,000+ member Florida Association for Behavior Analysis under Executive Director Jon Bailey. As her title implies, Christine will be responsible for BACB operations (and perhaps less obvious, for keeping me out of trouble). Please welcome Christine when you interact with her via email and telephone, and when you see her at conferences.



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# New BACB Examinations

*Christine Ratcliff, MS, BCBA  
BACB Chief Operating Officer*

*Fae Mellichamp, MS  
Psychometrician, Professional Testing, Inc.*

As a BACB certificant you are probably aware that some changes in the way people become certified went into effect in December of last year. The content of the exams was updated and candidates now take the exams via computer. While these might have seemed like sudden changes, their implementation is actually the result of a process that has been ongoing for many years.

The beginning of the new exams goes back as far as May 1998, when the BACB and the Florida Department of Children and Families held a meeting in conjunction with the ABA convention in Orlando. The purpose of the meeting was to update the content of the BACB certification examinations. This panel of behavior analysts suggested changes to both the exam content and the eligibility requirements.

These suggestions set into motion the full-fledged job analysis that was later conducted. A job analysis is a formal study designed to determine whether the content of an examination reflects the actual practice of the individuals working in a profession. Professionals from the field of behavior analysis (known as subject matter experts in the testing business) took part in a variety of activities (see Table 1), such as helping the BACB design and implement the job analysis survey, creating the Third Edition Task List and writing new exam questions. Most of these test-development activities were carried out under the guidance of Fae

Mellichamp, MS, who is a Psychometrician for Professional Testing, Inc. The BACB contracts with Professional Testing, Inc. to develop the BACB examinations.

The BACB also made the decision to move to computer-based testing (CBT) during this time. Pearson VUE, one of the largest and most-respected testing organizations in the world, became our CBT administration company. This switch allows the BACB to give examinations in cities all over the world. It also allows candidates to choose their examination date from within a two-week period. Multiple examination dates require multiple test forms, which was something new for the BACB. Ms. Mellichamp worked with behavior analyst subject matter experts throughout 2004 and 2005 to create a bank of test questions large enough to produce multiple exam forms.

After all of the hard work of so many people, the new exams were administered for the first time in December 2005. Afterward, there was still work to be done. Whenever an examination undergoes a major change, it is important to reevaluate the passing standard. Psychometricians use a formal process, known as a cut-score study, for this purpose. This process requires a panel of subject matter experts to determine the most appropriate passing score for an examination.

In January 2006, 16 BCBAAs and BCABAAs gathered in Tallahassee for two days to take part in the cut-score study for the new BACB exams. The participants were a representative sample of the different kinds of individuals who practice behavior analysis. There were academics, clinicians,





## New BACB Examinations *cont'd*

students and parents. They came from areas all around the United States, including one from outside the US. The group first discussed the minimum amount of competence required to become a BCBA or BCABA. They were asked to take the exams themselves and rate the difficulty of each question. They then compared their overall difficulty ratings with the actual performance of the candidates who took the exam. They discussed the impact of setting the passing scores at various levels and eventually came to a consensus about the most appropriate recommendation.

statistically equated to the December exams to ensure that any differences in difficulty levels do not adversely impact candidates.

The fact that the new examinations are now in place does not mean that the process is over. We are continually working to improve the examinations. Behavior analyst subject matter experts are needed on an ongoing basis to review, edit and write new examination questions. Also, job analysis studies are needed every 5 – 10 years to ensure the examination content stays current with the evolution of the field. This means the next job analysis is just over the horizon. The BACB extends our appreciation to all of the behavior analysts who have helped during this process in the past and we look forward to working with many more of you in the future.

The BACB Board of Directors met several days later to review and approve the recommendations of the participants. The new passing score was officially adopted, grades for the December candidates were calculated, and notifications were sent. Future BACB examinations will be

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<b>May 1998</b>	Panel of subject matter experts at ABA in Orlando recommends changes to Task List and eligibility requirements.
<b>February 2001</b>	Panel of 16 subject matter experts at CalABA creates the first draft of the Third Edition Task List and recommended course work changes.
<b>Summer 2001</b>	Panel of 36 behavior analysts respond to a pilot version of the job-analysis survey.
<b>January – March 2002</b>	Job-analysis survey is conducted online. 604 behavior analysts respond.
<b>May 2002</b>	Review committee approves the new Third Edition Task List and coursework requirement recommendations.
<b>2003</b>	Knowledge, Skills & Abilities Statements are written and edited by 51 subject matter experts.
<b>2004-2005</b>	Subject matter experts participate in item writing and review sessions at state and national conferences.
<b>April 2005</b>	BACB signs contract with Pearson VUE to administer exams via computer-based testing (CBT).
<b>October 2005</b>	Six forms of the BACB exams (3 BCBA, 3 BCABA) are delivered to Pearson VUE for CBT formatting.
<b>December 5-17, 2005</b>	Candidates take the BACB examinations based on the new Third Edition Task List via computer-based testing.
<b>January 16-17, 2006</b>	Panel of 16 BCBA's and BCABA's meet in Tallahassee to determine recommended passing scores for the exams.
<b>January 19, 2006</b>	BACB Board of Directors approves the recommended passing scores.
<b>January 23, 2006</b>	Grades are mailed to the candidates who took the exam.

Table 1: Milestones in the development of the new BACB examinations.



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# Board of Directors Elections

*Gerald Shook, PhD, BCBA  
BACB Executive Director*

It's not too early to begin thinking about next year's election of directors. We should have a minimum of four director positions to be decided in the 2007 certificant election. You may wish to review the following general description of the BACB election procedures and begin thinking about appropriate nominees for next year.

Unlike organizations such as the Association for Behavior Analysis and state-level behavior analysis associations, the BACB is not a membership organization. The BACB is non-profit corporation in the business of credentialing behavior analysts. The BACB Board of Directors has assumed the fiduciary responsibility for both providing quality credentials that meet accepted standards and maintaining a solvent business. In order to be in compliance with accepted procedural and legal standards, the directors must, among other things, ensure that the Board of Directors (BoD) is comprised of members with an appropriate and representative mix of experiences and skills. In some instances, such as with the BCABA chair, the directors will earmark a dedicated director chair to a particular group to ensure its representation. In other instances, such as with the consumer representative chair, the directors conduct the election process internally. The directors realize, however, that it is important to have significant certificant involvement in BACB governance and the majority of chairs are certificant-elected. The BACB founding Board of Directors put in place a carefully designed system of checks and balances that recognizes the fiduciary responsibility of the Board of Directors while providing for critical input and decision-making by certificants.

The annual election process begins with the directors selecting a Nominations Committee and chairperson at its annual spring meeting (Jim Partington was skillfully chaired the committee for the past

several years). Early in the following fall, the Nominations Committee contacts the BACB Executive Committee and requests recommendations for any "demographics and background needs" the ExCom might identify as desirable or necessary to maintain the representative mix of directors or to address particular needs of the BACB. The ExCom consists of the officers of the corporation: President of the Board of Directors (Jim Johnston), Treasurer (Jose Martinez-Diaz), and the Secretary/Executive Director (yours truly). The ExCom is in a good position to recognize BACB needs because it deals with BoD policy matters between BoD meetings and, other than the



Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, is the entity closest to the BACB's functioning on a daily basis. The ExCom considers all of the BACB needs in a new director and, if warranted, makes recommendations to the Nominations Committee on desired characteristics. For example, with the May 2006 retirement of Jim Partington from the BoD, the ExCom saw

a need for an additional "master clinician" on the BoD and recommended that the Nominating Committee take this under advisement in its future actions.

Following this input from the ExCom, the Nominations Committee solicits nominations from certificants for the certificant-elected director chairs that will be vacated the following May. Typically this is done through emails (please ensure that we always have your correct email and that you have listed BACB.com has a safe sender in your anti-spam program) and postings on the Maintain Certification page of BACB.com. These communications contain the relevant details of the nominations process and the ExCom recommended nominee characteristics. In this past election, for example, the recommendation of a "master clinician" and BCABA-level certificants were listed (the BCABA chair was up for election) as two desirable characteristics. In brief, the nomination process entails the nominating certificant checking with





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the nominated certificant to ensure their willingness to serve and then providing a completed nomination form to the BACB office.

The Nominations Committee then carefully considers all of the nominations from certificants (26 certificants were nominated for the 2006 elections). The Executive Director serves on this committee and, when warranted, provides additional details from ExCom deliberations and information on the BACB in general. The committee takes under

advisement the characteristics identified by the ExCom, and it reviews other important areas such as the person's history of contributions to professional credentialing and the advancement of behavior analysis, experience serving on other boards, availability for meetings, likelihood of taking on committee assignments or other duties, and primary interests relating to the BACB, to name a few. In addition, the committee tries to ensure that the BoD will be representative and well-balanced. In general, the Nominating Committee attempts to match the needs of the BACB with attributes of nominees in its selection process. This is, thankfully, a difficult process because historically the nominees have been of exceptional quality. The Nominations Committee selects a final list of nominees to be forwarded to the BoD for approval. These nominees are presented in recommended slates, with two nominees recommended for each vacant chair. The Nominations Committee may select one or more additional nominees to hold in

***In general, the Nominating Committee attempts to match the needs of the BACB with attributes of nominees in its selection process. This is, thankfully, a difficult process because historically the nominees have been of exceptional quality.***

abeyance, to be put forward in the event that the Board of Directors did not support one or more of the primary nominees.

The chairperson of the Nominations Committee presents the recommended slate of nominees to the directors at a Board of Directors meeting. The directors may fulfill their fiduciary responsibility in approving the slate as recommended, approving a modified slate, or charging the nominations committee with developing a new slate. To avoid undue influence from a single individual, the

Executive Director may provide information but does not vote in the slate-approval process. The directors typically give considerable weight to the recommendations of the Nominations Committee, but in the final analysis it is the Board of Directors that decides if the recommended slate will move forward.

Once a slate of nominees has been approved, the candidates are put to a vote of the certificants. The election typically is held early in the year with certificants being notified by email and through postings on the Maintain Certification page of BACB.com. The voting is conducted on-line through a secure voting process to maintain the integrity of the process while making voting convenient for certificants. Voters are provided with information on each candidate as part of the on-line vote so they may make well-informed decisions. All of us, as certificants, can then have the final say in who will be on the BACB Board of Directors.



## BACB at ABA

As usual, the BACB will be at the Association for Behavior Analysis, International conference in Atlanta from Thursday, May 25 through Wednesday May 31. Here are a few details on what we will be up to at the conference:

### **BACB Booth** (Thursday – Tuesday)

We will host a booth in the Exhibit Area throughout the conference where information about becoming certified and maintaining certification will be available. BACB staff will be available to answer questions. Dr. Shook & other members of the Board of Directors make frequent appearances throughout the conference.

### **BACB Exam Development** (Friday – Wednesday)

Fae Mellichamp, MS, Psychometrician will hold exam development events throughout the conference in the Geneva room. Free Type 5 continuing education credit is available. Email [fmellichamp@proftesting.com](mailto:fmellichamp@proftesting.com) to find out more about these activities.

### **Becoming BACB Certified** (7:00pm Saturday)

Christine Ratcliff will chair this informational meeting. This meeting is for anyone who wants information about qualifying or applying for BACB certification. This meeting is event #77 in the ABA program.

### **Autism Special Interest Group** (8:00pm Saturday)

Dr. Shook has been invited to speak to the Autism SIG. This meeting is event #91 in the ABA program.

### **BACB International Certification Development** (8:00am Sunday)

Dr. Shook will chair this meeting for non-US certificants and individuals interested in promoting BACB certification abroad. This meeting is event #94 in the ABA program.

### **Ethical Standards for Behavior Analysts** (10:00am Sunday)

Dr. Shook's presentation in this symposium will focus on the BACB's relationship with the Professional Affairs Committee of ABA and their work to gain increased recognition for the BACB credentials. This symposium is event #128 in the ABA program.

### **BACB University Contact Faculty Meeting** (7:00pm Sunday)

Dr. Shook will chair this meeting for faculty responsible for BACB approved course sequences and those interested in developing approved course sequences. This meeting is event #239 in the ABA program.

### **BACB New Developments Update and Annual Certificant Meeting** (7:00pm Monday)

Dr. Shook will chair this meeting for BACB certificants and any others who are interested in an update on the BACB's activities for the last year and our plans for the future. This meeting is event #403 in the ABA program.

### **Developing University Practica & Field-Based Training to Meet New BACB Experience Standards** (9:00am Tuesday)

Dr. Shook will chair this panel discussion about how two universities are approaching the BACB's new experience standards. This meeting is event #414 in the ABA program.

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