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# New Developments

The BACB typically holds its annual board of directors' meeting immediately following the Association for Behavior Analysis, International convention in May. The annual directors meeting is the occasion on which information collected through the year is reviewed, new policy recommendations are considered, and decisions regarding policy are taken. This newsletter will highlight new BACB developments and policy initiatives that emanated from the May meeting.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBERS

As you know, the BACB held elections for positions on the board of directors earlier this year, and the results were announced on [www.BACB.com](http://www.BACB.com) in March. At the meeting, we welcomed back Drs. Joel Hundert, Haydee Toro and Jose Martinez-Diaz for second three-year terms. Dr. Martinez-Diaz was re-elected as Treasurer and Dr. Shook was re-elected as Secretary. We also welcomed Dr. Henry Roane, whose term began immediately following the meeting, and who joined the meeting as an observer. This was a bittersweet meeting, as it was our last under the direction of President Dr. James Johnston, whose board of directors term ended at the conclusion of the meeting. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Jim for his years of hard work and steadfast leadership. He has been instrumental in making the BACB what it is today and, for that, we are extremely grateful. Dr. Judy Favell was elected as the new President of the BACB board of directors.

### SPECIALTIES

We mentioned in our last newsletter that the board of directors would review the outcomes from the panel convened in February of this year to determine the next course of action regarding potential specialty certification. The panel produced a list, similar to the current BACB Exam Content Task List, that represents the additional knowledge and skills that BCABAs who work with people with autism should possess. In developing this list, the panel found that the skills and knowledge required beyond the BACB were not fundamentally behavior analytic but, rather, information specific to autism. The list includes skills such as expertise in communicating the history and culture surrounding autism to others, extracting relevant information from data provided by other sources, explaining diagnostic procedures, educating others about non-behavior analytic interventions, and implementing safe emergency procedures, among others. Based upon all of the information collected regarding specialties, the BACB has decided not to continue development of a specialty certification at this time. The BACB has decided to release the Task List generated by the panel to the public. We believe this information can be of value to BCABAs working with people with autism, as well as to consumers and the general public. The list will be posted on [www.BACB.com](http://www.BACB.com) as soon as it is available. In the Discussion Articles section of this newsletter, Dr. James Johnston provides a summary of the process that was used to develop and determine the potential uses for the Task List for Board Certified Behavior Analysts Working with Persons with Autism.



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## New Developments *cont'd*

### **BOARD CERTIFIED ASSOCIATE BEHAVIOR ANALYST TITLE**

The practice of certifying behavior analysts at two different levels grew out of the pioneering State of Florida behavior analyst certification program. The BACB followed this example when it began its certification program, using the term "Associate" to identify the lower-level certification. Over the years, we have found this term to be troublesome when dealing with individuals outside of the field of behavior analysis. For example, we have received feedback that consumers often have a hard time understanding the difference between the two levels of certification. We have even learned of instances where consumers erroneously concluded that the "Associate" must be the higher certification! This issue is also a road block to working with legislators and funding agencies, whose actions may affect large numbers of certificants. We have found that a significant amount of explanation is often necessary to educate these parties about the relationship between BCBA and BCABA certificants. We have also found some parties hesitant to include BCABA certificants in legislation or funding due to the lack of clarity about the role of the BCABA in service delivery. These problems appear to be on the rise as we continue to promote recognition of BACB certification nationally and internationally. We feel it is necessary to ensure that consumers, legislators and funding agencies all are able to easily comprehend the role that both BCBA and BCABAs play in the lives of their clients. To that end, we are preparing to clarify these roles by ceasing the use of the confusing "Associate" term and replacing it with "Assistant." This change will go into effect January 1, 2009. At that time, BCABAs will begin representing themselves as "Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts" or "BCaBAs." Over the next year and a half, certificants will begin to see announcements about the new title on [www.BACB.com](http://www.BACB.com), as well as renewal and recertification forms and exam application forms. We believe this will be a positive change that allows anyone interacting with a BCaBA to quickly understand the individual's level of certification and role in service delivery. The BCABA member of the board of directors, Crystal Harms, provides her perspective on this change in the Discussion Articles section, later in this newsletter.

### **SUPERVISION OF BOARD CERTIFIED ASSOCIATE BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS**

Another recurring theme related to BCABAs is the issue of supervision. The position of the BACB has been that BCABAs be supervised by BCBA (see the "About BACB Certificants" section of [www.BACB.com](http://www.BACB.com) to view this statement). We often receive questions regarding whether supervision is required, either by the BACB or by other agencies, as well as questions regarding what the nature and frequency of supervision should be. It has been clear for some time that consumers, certificants, legislators, insurance carriers, and other parties are seeking more specific guidance on the issue of supervision.

In January 2006, the BACB conducted a survey of certificants which included some questions about supervision of BCABAs. Of the more than 1,700 respondents, 87% said they felt it is important for BCABAs to be supervised by BCBA. Fifty-seven percent agreed it is important enough that BCABAs working in settings where supervision is not provided should be required to hire a BCBA to serve as their supervisor. When asked how much supervision should be required, 43% said monthly contacts would be acceptable and 29% said that weekly contact should be required. Lastly, 47% of the BCBA responding indicated that they would be willing to be listed in an online registry of individuals willing to serve as supervisors.

Earlier this year, the BACB convened a task force to consider issues related to the supervision of BCABAs and make recommendations to the board of directors. The task force was comprised of eight certificants who are BCBA, BCABAs, BCBA who were previously BCABAs, individuals who train BCABAs and the board of directors' consumer representative. Members were geographically diverse, representing Virginia, Florida, California, New York, the United Kingdom and Ireland. The task force chair, Dr. Johnston and the BACB CEO, Dr. Shook also served as non-voting members of the task force.

After careful consideration of the available information and task force recommendations, the BACB has decided to implement a requirement that all BCABAs practice under the supervision of a BCBA. This requirement will not take effect until January



## New Developments *cont'd*

1, 2009. At that time, BCaBAs will be required to have at least one hour of supervision from a BCBA every month. Crystal Harms will also address this decision in her discussion article below.

The new requirements for certification can be found below. These requirements, as well as other details such as reporting and

documentation requirements will be posted on [www.BACB.com](http://www.BACB.com) and included in future newsletters. We also expect to offer a new function on the Certificant Registry in the future that will allow BCBA's willing to supervise to indicate that fact, making it easier for those in need of supervision to find a supervisor.

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### BCABA Supervision Requirements

- 1** The Behavior Analyst Certification Board requires all Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBA) to receive supervision by Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA).
- 2** This supervision should focus on (a) ensuring that the quality of the services provided by a BCaBA to their employer and to consumers meets the minimum standards of the profession as defined by the current BACB Task List, the BACB Professional Disciplinary Standards, the BACB Guidelines for Responsible Conduct for Behavior Analysts, current BACB rules and regulations, and the professional literature in the field (including textbooks and peer-reviewed journals) and (b) guiding the professional development of a BCaBA in ways that improve knowledge and skills.
- 3** In pursuing these objectives, supervisory interactions should generally include review, discussion, and recommendations focusing on the following topics:  
(a) case background information, (b) planned behavioral assessment procedures, (c) assessment outcomes, (d) data collection procedures, (e) possible intervention procedures and materials, (f) intervention outcome data, (g) modifications of intervention procedures, (h) ethical issues associated with behavior change services or employment, and (i) professional development needs and opportunities.
- 4** Formal supervision sessions should occur only through two-way interactions involving real-time visual and auditory contact (i.e., face-to-face meetings or electronic video sessions).
- 5** These sessions should involve prior submission of materials by the BCaBA concerning their professional work, as requested by the BCBA supervisor, and may further require follow-up submission of materials to the supervisor.
- 6** Depending on the nature of the BCaBA's work, some portion of these sessions should include observation of appropriate professional skills, including direct observation of actual practice with individuals.
- 7** Informal contacts between formal supervision sessions are encouraged and may include telephonic, e-mail, and postal communication, but these exchanges should not be considered and documented as formal supervision.
- 8** Supervision sessions should occur not less than once each month, and each session should last not less than one hour. During each calendar year, at least two of these monthly supervision sessions should be conducted in-person.



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## Reaction & Discussion Articles

Given that these new policy initiatives will have significant effects on most certificants, we have asked two individuals to provide some additional information and thoughts regarding these new developments. Crystal Harms, the board of directors' BCABA member, discusses the new policies regarding BCABA certificants. Dr. James Johnston provides a summary and discussion of the specialty development process.

## New Developments Affecting Board Certified Associate Behavior Analysts

*Crystal Harms, M.Ed., BCABA*

One of the topics of fervid discussion during the board of directors meeting was the distinction between a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and a Board Certified Associate Behavior Analyst (BCABA). As a BCABA, I have been practicing in the field using this title for the past 11 years, first as a FL-CABA in Florida and then as a Charter Certificant through the BACB. Throughout my years of work in Florida, Pennsylvania, and now New Jersey, I have found myself having to explain to clients the hierarchy of the certification and the meaning of the "Associate" title. At times, it has been a source of frustration. Maybe other BCABAs out there can relate to the uncomfortable nature of these conversations when clients are confused and then question where we fit into the service delivery model.

In addition, I have pursued BCBA's to provide me mentorship and supervision over the past decade. As an Associate Certificant, I am obligated to provide services with supervision from a BCBA. The mentoring relationships that I have formed over the years have been vital to my provision of ethical and best practice treatment to my clients. I see other BCABAs practicing without supervision and it concerns me considering the limitations to our treatment ability (see guidelines re: punitive intervention) and the need for guidance from professionals in the field with higher level educational and practical experience from which we can learn and our clients can benefit. Not all BCBA's seem fully informed as to the role of BCABAs either. The term "Associate" actually was adopted from the original Florida certification program. Since its adoption, the Board has come to realize that the "Associate" term can cause confusion and is not the most accurate representation of the role a BCABA plays in the delivery of

behavior analysis services. The Board decided that the term "Assistant" is more appropriate, as it clearly identifies the role of the BCABA. It is also easier to understand quickly, especially for consumers, because it is comparable to the terminology used in other professions, such as the Physician's Assistant and Physical Therapy Assistant, for example. In addition to being more informative for consumers, this could also potentially assist certificants as we continue to pursue recognition from insurance companies for treatment coverage.

Finally, the Board has decided to more formally outline the relationship between BCBA's and what will now be referred to as BCaBA's, Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts. The new requirements for supervision of BCaBA's were outlined earlier in this newsletter. Before any Assistant level colleagues begin to worry about the impact of and the ability to fulfill these new requirements, please be assured that they will come in very reasonable intervals and stages. The formal title change from Board Certified Associate Behavior Analyst to Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst will not occur until January 1, 2009, which will allow the BACB and certificants time to prepare for the change. Supervision requirements will also allow ample time between the announcement of the requirements and their implementation. I encourage everyone to look at these changes as positive moves on the part of our organization to create more cohesive and collaborative professional credentials that can be seen by the community as comparable to other well respected professions. I look forward to the opportunity to approach my local BCBA colleagues and feel comfortable requesting their mentorship as we move forward with this more formal relationship between BCBA's and BCaBA's.



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# Summary of the BACB's Consideration of Specialty Certification

*By James Johnston, Ph.D., BCBA*

## Background

When the BACB was established, it built on the existing applied behavior analysis certification program that had been operated by the State of Florida for some years. Consistent with its transitional agreement with the State of Florida, the BACB's new national program offered certification at both baccalaureate and Master's degree levels.

In recent years individuals with diagnoses of autism spectrum disorders have come to define the largest group receiving ABA services from BACB certificants. In a recent survey conducted in 2006, 55% of the respondents indicated they worked in the area of autism services.

## A Specialty Certificate?

With this background, more than two years ago the BACB began considering whether it should offer a specialty certificate that recognized specialized competencies related to providing ABA services to individuals with autism and/or other developmental disabilities. In addition to the question of whether a specialty certificate was a good idea, it was not clear whether competencies in the areas of autism services versus other developmental disabilities should be combined or addressed separately.

The BACB's interest in this issue arose partly because many certificants were clearly providing specialized services, thereby creating an opportunity to acknowledge achievement of specialized competencies. However, a number of certificants were also concerned that not everyone who had passed the certification examination and was providing such services might have the specialized competencies represented by the ABA literature and generally accepted best practices. This concern was especially strong among practitioners working in the area of autism services.

## 2006 Survey

The BACB approached these issues with a deliberate process. The first step involved posing a series of questions as part of a larger 2006 survey of certificants. Included were questions regarding the potential value of a specialty credential, the possible

requirements for obtaining and maintaining it, the fees that certificants might be willing to pay for it, and possible areas for specialization. The two most highly ranked areas for specialization were autism and other developmental disabilities. Based upon this information, the BACB board of directors decided to take the first step toward investigating the potential for specialty certification in these areas.

## Developing the Content List

The first step in the development of any credential is to define the knowledge, skills, and abilities that the people likely to hold the credential possess. This is typically done through job analysis processes that define and refine the content of the field for which the credential is being developed. In order to begin this process, the BACB convened a three-day subject matter expert panel following the 2007 CalABA convention in San Francisco to help consider the nature of the additional competencies that might be required for providing specialized services to individuals with various developmental disabilities. The panel was a carefully selected group of certificants who work with individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities and who also represent academics, administrators, consultants, and practitioners who supervise or conduct direct behavior analytic interventions. Panel members included:

- **Shahla Alai-Rosales, Ph.D., BCBA**
- **Helen Bloomer, MS, BCBA**
- **Tom Evans, Ph.D., BCBA**
- **Maurice Feldman, Ph.D., BCBA**
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- **Robert Ross, MS, BCBA**
- **Leslie Sinclair, MA, BCBA**
- **Mary Jane Weiss, Ph.D., BCBA**

Under the guidance of the BACB's Psychometrician, Fae Mellichamp, MS, this panel completed a modified DACUM process. DACUM (short for Developing a Curriculum) is a type of occupational analysis performed under the guidance of a trained DACUM facilitator that describes an occupation and the body of knowledge required to perform that occupation. Through this process, the goal was to discover whether that body of



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knowledge would be sufficiently distinct from the knowledge required to become BCBA certified and whether different bodies of knowledge are required to work with different populations (i.e., autism vs. other developmental disabilities).

The results of this process will not be detailed here. However, it was particularly notable that the major "duty" areas that emerged largely supplemented the existing task standards with proposed competencies that often went beyond behavior analytic expertise and skills. In other words, the panel generally found the existing Exam Content Task List covered the fundamental behavior analytic skills needed to work with any population. Instead, they found that the additional knowledge and skills required to serve people with autism or other developmental disabilities were not fundamentally behavior analytic. They found it likely that the body of knowledge required to work with people with autism would be slightly different from that required to work with people with other developmental disabilities. Their focus turned to identifying the body of knowledge required to work with people with autism. The additional knowledge and skills included expertise in communicating the history and culture of autism to others, extracting relevant information from data provided by other sources, explaining diagnostic procedures, educating others about non-behavior analytic interventions, and implementing safe emergency procedures, among others.

#### **BACB Decision**

At its most recent annual meeting, the BACB considered not only the findings of the expert panel but the full range of issues associated with the question of whether it should offer a specialized certificate. For instance, it considered other mechanisms for improving the quality of services offered by certificants to these populations. One option is to use the results of the DACUM process to encourage development of training curricula that might be offered by college and university programs or even by the BACB.

The Board further considered actions it was in the process of taking that might impact the performance of certificants. For example, the Board is in the early stages of reviewing its disciplinary standards, with the intention of broadening their reach. Two other changes are addressed at ensuring that the limitations of the BCABA credential are more easily recognized and accommodated. A planned revision of the certificate title replacing the term "Associate" with the term "Assistant" will clarify the collaborative relationship that must exist between BCABAs and BCABAs. In addition, requiring that BCABAs receive a certain level of supervision by BCABAs is expected to ameliorate concerns that might be driving some interests in a specialty certificate. When these changes are eventually promulgated, they may be expected to curb some of the more egregious problems that have been noted in delivery of services.

The BACB considered challenges that might be involved in establishing the mechanisms for acquiring advanced coursework and experience required to sit for a specialty certificate examination. Would training programs have the resources to accommodate advanced or specialized training? Would this kind of training need to be offered by the BACB, independently of universities? Who would be qualified to teach such courses or supervise applicants? Many who would be interested in such a certificate are no longer in school, and would not be able to return.

With all issues thoroughly considered, the directors decided to not develop a specialty certificate at this time. The general feeling was that it would be wise to first evaluate the impact of the planned changes identified above. Meanwhile, the Board is grateful to the panel members for their participation and the valuable information they provided. The BACB plans to publish the Task List generated by the expert panel. While the possibility of an advanced certificate or a specialty certificate remains open, ongoing review of the factors considered over the last two years may make other options more appealing.



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# New Behavior Analysis Journal

Our last announcement is not related to our board of directors meeting; however we are happy to share the news of a new journal in behavior analysis that is specifically directed towards the needs of practitioners:

## CALL FOR PAPERS

### ***Behavior Analysis in Practice (BAP)***

*Behavior Analysis in Practice*, a new journal published by the Association for Behavior Analysis, is now accepting papers for its inaugural issue, scheduled for spring 2008. *BAP* is a peer-reviewed translational publication designed to provide science-based, best-practices information relevant to service delivery in behavior analysis. The target audience includes front-line service workers and their supervisors, scientist-practitioners, and school personnel. Types of articles and topics published in *BAP* will include empirical reports describing the application and evaluation of behavior-analytic procedures and programs; discussion papers on professional and practice issues; technical articles on methods, data analysis, or instrumentation in the practice of behavior analysis; tutorials on terms, procedures, and theories relevant to best practices in behavior analysis; and critical reviews of books and products that are aimed at practitioners or consumers of behavior analysis. Authors should use language that is easily accessible to practitioners, clearly define all technical terms, and link research findings directly to practice. **To ensure consideration for the Spring 2008 issue, please submit manuscripts to the editor by October 1, 2007**

## ***Submission Information***

Manuscripts submitted to *BAP* should be prepared according to the style described in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th edition). Submit five (5) high-quality copies of the entire manuscript (or one electronic copy, submitted in pdf or Word format), including figures and tables, along with a letter to the Editor that contains the following information: (a) A request for review for possible publication of the manuscript in *BAP*, (b) A statement indicating that the manuscript has not been published previously and has not been or will not be submitted elsewhere during the review process, (c) A classification of article into type (empirical report, discussion paper, technical article, tutorial, review), and (d) The corresponding author's business address, email address, and telephone number as well as any upcoming address change. The title page should contain the title of the paper; the first and surname of all authors; the affiliations of each author; and the name, address, email address, and telephone number of the corresponding author.

## **Please address manuscripts and inquiries to:**

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