

LIGHTHOUSE FREE PARENT GUIDE

28 Questions to Ask Any ABA Center

The complete evaluation checklist — written by parents
who sat in those waiting rooms and asked every one of these.



Guiding families from diagnosis to thriving

Before You Visit

Choosing an ABA center is one of the biggest decisions you'll make for your child — and walking in with the right questions changes everything. This checklist covers seven areas that matter most, from staff experience to how the center handles separation anxiety on day one.

You don't have to ask every question. Pick the ones that matter most to YOUR child. The goal isn't to quiz the center — it's to leave feeling informed and confident. Watch how they respond: warm, transparent answers are a green flag. Defensiveness is not.

Bring this guide with you, check off questions as you go, and trust your instincts. You know your child better than anyone in that building.

1

About the Clinical Team

Who will actually be working with your child

- **1. Who specifically will be my child's BCBA, and how much direct time will they spend with them each week?**

Why it matters: The BCBA designs the entire therapy plan — you want to know this person well.

- **2. How many RBTs (technicians) will work with my child — and will it be consistent or rotating?**

Why it matters: Consistency matters enormously for children on the spectrum.

- **3. What is your staff turnover rate? How long have your current BCBAs been here?**

Why it matters: High turnover disrupts a child's progress significantly.

- **4. How do you handle it if my child and a therapist aren't a good match?**

Why it matters: Good centers have a clear, no-pressure process for this.

- **5. Will the team who evaluated or diagnosed my child be involved in their therapy plan?**

Why it matters: Continuity from evaluation to treatment is a real advantage where available.

2

Therapy Approach

How they actually work with your child

- **6. What does a typical day look like for a child in your program?**

Why it matters: Helps you visualize what your child's experience will actually feel like.

- **7. How do you balance play-based learning versus structured instruction?**

Why it matters: You don't want therapy to feel like all drills — balance matters.

- **8. How do you approach challenging behaviors — what does that process look like?**

Why it matters: You want compassionate, non-punitive strategies. Ask for specifics.

■ **9. How do you measure and track progress, and how often will I receive updates?**

Why it matters: You should receive regular data, not just verbal reassurance.

■ **10. How do you coordinate with my child's school and teachers?**

Why it matters: Alignment between therapy and school means faster progress.

3

Parent Involvement

Your role in the therapy journey

- **11. What does your parent training program look like — structured sessions or as-needed?**

Why it matters: You want to actively reinforce skills at home, not just drop off and go.

- **12. Can I observe my child's sessions — is that allowed or encouraged?**

Why it matters: Transparency is a hallmark of a high-quality center.

- **13. How do I communicate with the team if I have concerns between sessions?**

Why it matters: You need a clear, responsive point of contact.

- **14. Are there parent support groups or community resources you connect families with?**

Why it matters: The best centers support the whole family, not just the child.

4

Practical & Logistics

The important day-to-day details

- **15. When exactly can my child start, and how does the scheduling process work?**

Why it matters: Lock in your timeline so there are no surprises.

- **16. How many hours per week do you recommend for a child their age and profile?**

Why it matters: Make sure the recommended intensity matches your child's actual needs.

- **17. What insurance do you accept, and is there anything I should know about coverage?**

Why it matters: Confirm your plan is fully covered before committing to anything.

- **18. What happens if my child is sick or I need to cancel — what's your attendance policy?**

Why it matters: Real life happens. Know the policy upfront.

5

Staff Experience & Peer Environment

The concerns most parents are afraid to ask about

- **19. What is the minimum experience level for RBTs working directly with my child? Do you hire new graduates?**

Why it matters: RBTs only need 40 hours of training to certify — ask if the center adds extra requirements.

- **20. How closely does the BCBA supervise the RBTs — in the room, or checking in periodically?**

Why it matters: Frequent, hands-on supervision makes a huge difference, especially with newer staff.

■ **21. How do you group children — by age, ability level, or diagnosis severity?**

Why it matters: You deserve to know who your child will spend their day alongside.

■ **22. How do you handle a situation where another child is having a crisis in a shared space?**

Why it matters: There should be a clear protocol that protects every child's sense of safety.

■ **23. How much of my child's time will be one-on-one versus in a group setting?**

Why it matters: Younger or newly starting children often do better with more one-on-one time first.

6

Separation Anxiety & Transitions

Setting your child up for a safe, calm start

- **24. My child experiences separation anxiety at drop-off — what is your process for helping a child transition when a parent leaves?**

Why it matters: You want a warm, structured plan for day one — not just “they’ll be fine.”

- **25. Can I leave a comfort item — like a laminated photo of me — that my child can access when anxious?**

Why it matters: Small comfort anchors can transform drop-offs. Good centers welcome them.

- **26. Can we do a short visit before the official start date so the environment feels familiar on day one?**

Why it matters: Familiar equals safer. Reducing the unknown reduces anxiety dramatically.

7

The Road Ahead

Planning the next chapter beyond intensive therapy

- **27. At what point would you consider reducing my child's weekly hours, and what milestones would trigger that conversation?**

Why it matters: You want a clear roadmap for when intensive therapy transitions to a lighter schedule.

- **28. Could a mainstream or Montessori school environment alongside reduced hours work for my child in the future?**

Why it matters: Peer modeling from verbal, typically-developing children is powerful for language growth — get their clinical opinion.

*“You are not just choosing a therapy center.
You are choosing the people who will help your child bloom.
Take your time. Trust your instincts. You've got this.”*

— With love, from parents who've been there ■

This guide is free. Share it with any family who needs it.