

# **Applied Behavior Analysis in Mississippi: New Opportunities, New Challenges, and New Solutions**

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## **ABSTRACT**

According to the 2015 Mississippi Autism Advisory Committee Report, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) affects an estimated 10,743 children in Mississippi. ASD causes social and communication issues as well as repetitive behaviors, self-injurious behaviors, tantrum behaviors, and aggression. As the prevalence of ASD grows, the demand for evidence-based treatment increases.

Location can limit access to assessment and treatment services for families living in regions without qualified behavioral professionals. Given advances in two major areas in Mississippi – workforce development and Telehealth – this growing shortage of professionals could be addressed while helping bridge the critical gaps in the coordination and availability of services.

Telehealth uses a secure, HIPPA compliant video connection system to deliver health-related services. It is helpful in screening, evaluation, and intervention and allows for the easy dissemination of information to all agencies and professionals. Multiple agencies would be able to collaborate through virtual meetings. Via telehealth, teachers can be trained in implementing applied behavior analysis for behavior reduction and acquisition, as well as social skills development, supporting Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) through inclusion of children with ASD into general classroom settings. Finally, parenting skills

training may be taught to parents through a virtual private network (VPN), so they do not have to leave their homes to give their children the care they need.

We propose a multi-tiered, quantifiable solution to the crisis facing Mississippi in the area of ABA providers based on a legislative approach to funding training programs in Michigan. We will offer a proposed replication of a study conducted by Fisher et al. (2014) in which participants showed a noteworthy enhancement in their performance of behavior reduction and acquisition programs. Telehealth could provide an economic and efficient way to overcome the challenges facing Mississippi in assessment and treatment of autism spectrum disorders in our children.