

*Association of*



*Professional  
Behavior Analysts*

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Considerations for Evaluating  
Accreditation Bodies for  
Applied Behavior Analysis  
Service Organizations

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This document is offered to assist leaders of organizations in deciding to pursue accreditation for their service organization. This document describes accreditation, some typical components of the process, why an organization might seek accreditation, and some considerations that may be helpful in making their decision.

## **What is accreditation?**

Accreditation is a designation provided by an independent accrediting program to an organization, indicating that it meets standards the accrediting program has set related to quality and safety. Accreditation is conferred on organizations, which is separate from certification or licensure of individual practitioners. The considerations in this document are offered specifically to assist leaders in organizations providing Applied Behavior Analysis-based services in their decision to pursue accreditation.

Accreditation is generally voluntary and involves an initial application and evaluation, followed by maintenance requirements. The accreditation process includes a comprehensive and independent review of the organization's operations and services. This may include reviewing and evaluating written documents submitted in the application packet (e.g., mission statement, operations manuals, policies and procedures, results of employee and consumer/client satisfaction surveys), as well as conducting a site visit to further review and evaluate documents and electronic systems, observe service delivery, and interview key clinical and operations leaders in the organization.

## **Why might an organization pursue accreditation?**

Accreditation is a way to communicate to consumers that an accredited organization is committed to providing quality services through meeting and maintaining standards. Depending on the accrediting body, undergoing review for potential accreditation may enable an organization to have its policies, processes, and practices compared to those of similar organizations or to national or international standards that have been set by the relevant industry. Through that process the organization might identify strengths and weaknesses and receive feedback that may help the organization make improvements in areas such as outcomes for clients, staff morale and productivity, collaborator satisfaction, business and clinical efficiencies, funding, public relations, and recognition by peers, the community, and the

larger industry. Achieving accreditation may help an organization recruit clients and staff and secure funding from third-party payers, governments, foundations, or investors.

## Consideration Questions

Leaders in organizations should engage in a thorough evaluation of an accreditation program to assist in deciding to pursue accreditation for their organization. Below are some points for consideration but note that the list of questions is not exhaustive. The information needed to carry out an evaluation based on the considerations below should be transparent and easy to find on an accrediting body's website (i.e., finding the information should not be behind a paywall, require the creation of an account, or require submitting a contact form or email).

### Accrediting Body

- What is the accreditation body's mission?
- Is the accreditation body an independent organization?
- If the accreditation body is owned by, or affiliated with, another organization or company, does it operate independently?
  - Does the primary or affiliated company focus on, or represent, a specific group (e.g., funder, client/patient, service provider)?
  - Are there clear separations to prevent conflicts of interest (e.g., finances, decision making)?
- Is the accreditation body a for-profit or nonprofit organization?
- How long has the accreditation body existed?
- What is the accreditation body's board structure and make up?
  - How are board members or trustees selected and what are their terms of service?
- Is the accreditation body accredited by a recognized and independent accrediting entity?
  - If yes, is there a clear description of the processes the accreditation body implements to ensure that it complies with the standards of its own accrediting entity?
  - If not, is there an indication that the accreditation body is pursuing accreditation or will pursue accreditation when it qualifies to do so?
- Is there a list of accredited organizations on the accrediting body's website?
- Is there a mechanism that is easy to locate and use for the submission self-reports or of complaints against an organization that is accredited?
- Are data published regarding disciplinary decisions, including the removal of accreditation due to misconduct or violations of the standards?

## Accreditation Standards and Processes

- Is it clear how the accreditation standards were developed?
  - Is it clear that the standards were informed by a diverse group of experts, including individuals with knowledge of the generally accepted practice of the profession.
  - What are the metrics and processes used to determine quality?
- Is there a clear indication that the standards are, or will be reviewed at regular intervals, and how they will be evaluated?
  - Is there a clear description of the review process and who conducts the reviews (i.e., an independent evaluator vs internal audits)?
  - Are there safeguards against conflicts of interest during the review process?
- Do the standards align with the profession's generally accepted standards of practice and care as reflected in codes of ethics published by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board® (BACB®), conduct standards in local (e.g., province, state) behavior analyst licensure or regulatory laws and rules (where applicable), practice guidelines and other documents published by professional organizations (e.g., the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts, the Association for Behavior Analysis International), code descriptors and associated resources on health insurance billing for ABA services published by the American Medical Association and/or the ABA Coding Coalition ([www.abacodes.org](http://www.abacodes.org))?
- Are the standards consistent with state and federal laws and regulations governing the organization's service clients, types of services provided, and funding sources?
- Are the full set of standards and processes for applying for and maintaining accreditation freely available before committing to moving forward with the accreditation process?
  - Are all costs for application, review, and accreditation maintenance clearly outlined before any fees are paid?
  - Is there a clear timeline for the application, review, and maintenance processes?
- Who carries out the reviews of applicants and are there processes in place to detect and address conflicts of interest?
- Does the review process include site visits, observations, and interviews?
- What procedures are in place to protect the client and employee privacy rights during the accreditation review process?
- What safeguards are in place to protect any proprietary content?
- Is there a clear description of how accreditation decisions are made?
- If an organization fails to obtain accreditation, is there a process for receiving feedback and reapplying?
- Is there a mechanism for appealing decisions?
- What is the process if a self-report is submitted by, or a complaint is filed against, an accredited organization?
- What is the process if an accredited organization fails to meet maintenance or reaccreditation requirements?