

Starting an ABA Practice: General Tips & Suggestions

Starting and successfully maintaining an ABA practice is a lot of work!! Are you prepared for not just the successes, but the challenges?

- Be prepared to initially pour the majority of your mental focus, energy, finances, and time into getting your business off the ground
- Most BCBA's are clinicians, not business attorneys or tax accountants. Know when to outsource and call in help, and start establishing a good amount of local contacts to bounce ideas off of or call up with your questions
- The small business administration in your area is a good source of information to help you comply with the laws of the state you practice in
- Join professional associations such as AIBA and APBA, and join your state ABA chapter. Network with other practice owners in your area, and make sure they know you are available to accept referrals
- Is your state a licensing state or is the BCBA enough to practice there? You need to know this
- Take a de-e-e-p breath before jumping into the funding waters. Depending on your area, you may have a multitude of ABA funding options such as grants, state assistance, educational scholarships, private insurance, or Medicaid. Or, you could find it incredibly challenging to help clients locate funding options (which only leaves private pay as an option). Research funding options in your area so you know what to tell your clients
- Become credentialed with insurance companies in your area (understand that every state is NOT an insurance mandated state). Be prepared for the credentialing process to take time, cost money, and if just one error is found in the application you may have to re-submit the whole thing. Be prepared that credentialing will be necessary for all certified/licensed staff, and this process will take time. Once you finally are credentialed, be prepared that claim pay out can take anywhere from 30-90 days, and denials are common
- Document everything, keep meticulous records, and stay audit-ready. If you are not naturally organized, neat, and efficient, you need to get that way quickly or hire someone who is
- Do you know how to be a great boss? Do you know how to retain staff and when to terminate staff? Do you understand how to keep client satisfaction high? What will set you apart from local competitors, and how will you communicate this to potential clients? Depending on your local area, the field of ABA clinics/businesses could be pretty competitive and over saturated
- Worst case scenario – you can't find any clients. How will you market the business? How will you advertise? Can you afford to keep your company afloat if it is not turning a profit for several months? If several of your clients suddenly terminate services, can your business survive?
- Best case scenario – you have more clients than you can handle. How will you recruit and train new staff? Is your employment package desirable to BCBA's? Does your funding source require RBT's? If so, you have to factor in the cost and time for new staff to obtain the RBT credential, before they can be placed on a case. How will you handle rapid staff turnover (which can happen frequently in this field)?
- Set up an NPI number and a CAQH account. Once you have a legally formed business entity with its own tax ID, you will need an NPI for it as well.
- Who will create the policies & procedures for your business? Who will create the contracts? Who will process your billing and negotiate rates with the insurance companies? Which bank will hold the company funds? While you are managing the business, who will run the clinical side? You need to consider all of this
- Will the company have a physical location? If not where will company supplies and materials be stored? Where will company trainings be held? Where will you store client documentation (raw data)?
- What is the target population that you wish to serve? This will determine much of what you need to do and prepare for as far as liability insurance, advertising, and staff recruitment.

- Will your staff be employees or independent contractors? Do you understand the differences between each and what the law requires?

Suggested Links (**Note:** *These are not personal recommendations, but rather a list of websites/resources that may or may not be helpful for anyone interested in opening an ABA business*):

<https://centralreach.com/opening-a-new-aba-therapy-practice-five-things-to-avoid/>

[https://www.reddit.com/r/BehaviorAnalysis/comments/27y4xj/i am a bcba with my own aba agency_ama/](https://www.reddit.com/r/BehaviorAnalysis/comments/27y4xj/i_am_a_bcba_with_my_own_aba_agency_ama/)

<http://www.advancedtrainingsolutions.com/content/leadership-series-growing-your-aba-business-0>

<http://www.bsci21.org/aba-entrepreneur-series-4-tips-for-a-sole-proprietorship/>

<http://blog.asha.org/2010/12/07/starting-my-private-practice/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4384161/profile>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/125448684137508/>

<http://www.abpathfinder.com/starting-a-business-is-the-most-fun-challenging-frustrating-maddening-exciting-and-rewarding-experience-ive-had-in-my-20-year-professional-career/>

<https://upd.caqh.org/OAS/Default.aspx>

<https://nppes.cms.hhs.gov/NPPES/Welcome.do>

<http://www.apbahome.net/>

<http://www.abainternational.org/>

<https://www.business.rutgers.edu/rnsbdc>