

Caravel behavior experts presents:

## Stop Putting Trains Up Your Nose!

Is this developmentally appropriate?





CARAVEL AUTISM HEALTH

A provider of **Applied Behavior Analysis** services,  
diagnostic, and counseling services to children with  
**autism** and their families.

We currently serve the Greater Chicago land area,  
Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Washington and Idaho.





## Our Mission

## We change lives.

Caravel Autism Health's team of autism health professionals is dedicated to working with children with autism and related developmental disabilities and their families to develop skills, create connections and instill confidence. Our approach to ABA therapy is rooted in research and results.

Our founders and therapists are committed to being the most passionate clinicians in the autism health field. At Caravel Autism Health, our mission is to change lives.

A large, stylized fingerprint graphic in a lighter shade of blue, positioned on the left side of the slide. It features concentric, wavy lines that form a circular pattern, resembling a fingerprint.

## Our Presenters

### Alexis Abern, PsyD

Alexis Abern is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist who conducts diagnostic evaluations. Alexis specializes in diagnostics as well as working with families to process emotional reactions to or stress around receiving a diagnosis of ASD.

### Erica Smith, BCBA

Erica Smith is the Clinic Director of our Chicago Center and has been in the field of ABA for 10 years. Erica specializes in working with tweens and teens diagnosed with autism to promote social skills, self regulation, and behavior management. Erica advocates for the importance of parent involvement in therapy and enjoys educating parents on the aspects of autism related to their child.

## Agenda

- Understanding your child's development
- Concerns to bring to your doctor
- Understanding the evaluation process and results
- What happens if your child is diagnosed with autism
- Questions?

# Understanding Your Child's Development

- Development is an interactive process between the environment (which includes the physical, social, and emotional environment) as well as biology.
  - Life outcomes are not determined by genes alone. Experiences can chemically modify genes and can change how and when they are expressed.
    - Children are born with the capacity to learn to focus, sustain attention, control impulses, and retain and recall information from memory; however, experiences as early as the first year of life can influence the foundation for how well these skills develop.
  - There is a significant portion of “brain architecture” that is shaped during the first three years of life; while better sooner than later when it comes to intervention, this window of opportunity does not just close on their third birthday!
- Every child develops at their own pace, so it is not possible to predict when a given child will learn a specific skill. Developmental milestones give us an idea or framework for understanding the changes a child will go through as they grow and get older.
  - Examples of developmental milestones: smiling for the first time, waving “bye,” taking first steps, saying first words, etc.



# Understanding your Child's Development – Concerns to Bring to Your Doctor

## Language Milestones

- **By age 2**
  - Points to items or pictures when they are named
  - Knows names of familiar people and body parts
  - Speaks with 2-4 word sentences
  - Follows simple instructions
- **By age 3**
  - Follows 2-3 step instructions
  - Can name most familiar things
  - Says first name/age/sex
  - Carries on conversation for 2-3 sentences
- **By age 4**
  - Knows basic rules of grammar (he/she/I/you)
  - Sings songs

## Delayed or Missing Milestones

- **By age 2**
  - Missing milestones
  - Doesn't use 2-word phrases ("drink milk", "purple ball")
  - Doesn't follow simple instructions
- **By age 3**
  - Drools or has unclear speech
  - Doesn't speak in sentences
  - Doesn't follow simple instructions
  - Limited or no eye contact
  - Loses skills they once had
- **By age 4**
  - Can't retell favorite story
  - Doesn't use me/you or pronouns correctly
  - Speaks unclearly
  - Doesn't follow 3 part instructions

# Understanding your Child's Development – Concerns to Bring to Your Doctor

## Social Skills Milestones

- **By age 2**
  - Copies others (especially adults and older children)
  - Excited around other kids
  - Plays next to other kids but starts incorporating them – like chase
- **By age 3**
  - Shows affection for friends
  - Takes turns
  - Begins dressing/undressing
  - Shows concern for crying friend
- **By age 4**
  - Plays pretend
  - Prefers to play with other kids, not alone
  - Talks about likes and dislikes

## Delayed or Missing Milestones

- **By age 2**
  - Doesn't copy actions or words
  - Doesn't follow simple instructions
  - Doesn't know what to do with common items – fork, brush, phone, spoon
  - Loses skills they once had
- **By age 3**
  - Can't work simple toys – puzzles, peg board, turning handle
  - Unclear speech or doesn't speak in sentences
  - Little interest in playing with other kids or toys
  - Doesn't play pretend
- **By age 4**
  - Doesn't play pretend
  - No interest in other children or ignores other children
  - Can't retell favorite story



# Understanding your Child's Development – Concerns to Bring to Your Doctor

## Other Behavioral Concerns to Bring to Your Doctor

- Child is hypersensitive to sensory input – resists certain touches, fabrics, foods, sounds, etc.
- Child is hyposensitive to sensory input – seeks sensory input like looking at lights, holding items close to their eyes, high pain tolerance, etc.
- Plays with toys in a restricted or repetitive way – toys must be in a certain order, resistant to trying new ways to play with toys, watches the same videos or same songs repeatedly.
- Frequent or intense "meltdowns" - tantrums, throwing, aggression. May sometimes seem as though they happen for no reason.

## Concerns to Bring to Your Child's Doctor

If your child is missing milestones, delayed in meeting their milestones, or loses skills they once had you should contact your doctor

Autism can be diagnosed as early as 18 months. Your doctor may recommend an evaluation if your child is not reaching their developmental milestones.

The CDC has a Milestone Tracker App and a multitude of checklists to track your child's milestones to ensure they are developing appropriately.

- [CDC's Developmental Milestones | CDC](#)

# Understanding the Evaluation Process and Results

- Screening
- Seeking an evaluation
  - Diagnostic Interview: gathering information regarding a child's functioning across many domains and important areas of functioning as well as both child and family history
- Testing
  - Autism-specific assessments (CARS2, ADOS-2)
  - Adaptive and general behavioral questionnaires (BASC-3, Vineland-3)
  - Cognitive Assessments (Bayley-4, WPPSI-IV, WISC-V)
  - Language Assessments (PLS-5, CELF-5)
- Receiving Results and Feedback

# What Happens if Your Child is Diagnosed with Autism

- Your child may be assigned a 'level' by the psychologist
  - Level = amount of support your child requires to be successful in their environment
- Levels can change, the goal of early intervention is to teach your child the skills they need to be as independent as possible, thus decreasing the level of support they need
  - Level 1 = requiring support
  - Level 2 = requiring substantial support
  - Level 3 = requiring very substantial support



# What Happens if Your Child is Diagnosed with Autism

Early intervention or similar supports will likely be recommended by your child's doctor or psychologist

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)
- Occupational Therapy (OT)
- Speech Therapy
- Family Support

# What Happens if Your Child is Diagnosed with Autism

What is ABA?

ABA is a scientifically proven model of therapy individually designed for your child to reach their goals

Intensive, early intervention using ABA can result in the best outcomes for your child

- Intensive therapy = 30-40 hours/week

ABA is a temporary service that targets teaching your child foundational skills, or reaching their milestones, to promote independence, success, and increase quality of life for both you and your child

Parent training and collaboration is an essential component of ABA

# What Happens if Your Child is Diagnosed with Autism?

## ABA to Bridge the Developmental Gap and Prepare for School

- Children need important foundational skills to help them be successful in school and able to learn
  - Follow instructions, adapt to changes, wait or tolerate being told no, interact with peers, etc.
- Children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder do not typically learn these skills by simply watching other children
  - Utilizing ABA services early in life, before starting school, can set your child up for success, foster independence, and increase quality of life
- Center-based ABA program can target preschool skills while also providing 1:1 therapist support

## Parent Testimonials

“When our minds and lives were still spinning, you reached out and slowed the ride down a bit. Thank you for that. Thank you for always listening and making us feel like we mattered. That our child mattered. Thank you for listening to and answering my questions, even those that don’t really have an answer. You gave me hope and reassurance. Thank you. Know that you had an impact. You had a part in his success. His ability to take on the world is greater because of you.” — A former Caravel client parent

*Parent testimonials.* (2021a). Caravel Autism Health. <https://caravelautism.com/parent-testimonials/>



## Resources

- [What is Autism Spectrum Disorder? | CDC](#)
- [Applied Behavior Analysis \(ABA\) | Autism Speaks](#)
- [CDC's Developmental Milestones | CDC](#)
- [Insights Blog | Caravel Autism Health](#)

A large, stylized fingerprint graphic in a lighter shade of blue, centered on the left side of the slide. The ridges of the fingerprint are clearly visible, creating a circular pattern.

# Questions?



**Thank you for  
attending today!**

For more information on  
**Caravel Autism Health** and our  
services, please contact our intake  
team at: **844.583.5437**