



Hidden**Potential**  
Behavior & Education Services

## Parent Handbook

2023

### Mission Statement:

*Hidden Potential is dedicated to supporting children with developmental disabilities and their families. We help children reach their full potential by providing individualized support and education designed to improve their lives at home, in their educational setting, and throughout their community. We know that families are an integral part of this success, and all caregivers are active members of their child's team. Hidden Potential utilizes the principles and techniques of applied behavior analysis to guide the process and meet the unique needs of each family.*

*If you treat an individual as he is, he will remain how he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be.*

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

## What is ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is the research-based, scientific method to understanding and changing behavior. It studies the functional relationship between one's behaviors and their environment. ABA can be used to teach any behavior and is often used to improve specific behaviors related to communication, social skills, independence with self-care, and school participation. ABA looks at what happens before and after a behavior to determine why it is occurring and how best to respond. Skills are broken down into small steps to assist in teaching and allow correct responses to be reinforced and increase the likelihood of continued success. Hidden Potential also utilizes errorless teaching to decrease frustration and make learning fun!

Data is collected throughout the assessment and treatment process continually providing necessary information to make informed decisions about treatment and the efficacy of the treatment plan. The goal is to utilize behavioral contingencies to teach more functional skills, reduce undesirable behaviors, and improve overall quality of life.

ABA is considered an evidence-based best practice treatment by the US Surgeon General and by the American Psychological Association. It has been shown to be effective treatment for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) but is also applicable to children with other developmental disabilities. An ABA program targets specific developmental areas such as attending, imitation, fine/gross motor skills, communication, toileting, functional play, social skills, self-help, and reducing problem behavior.

At Hidden Potential, we use a wide variety of behavior analytic teaching methods such as:

- Discrete Trial Training
- Incidental Teaching
- Verbal Behavior
- Chaining
- Social Stories
- Reinforcement
- Prompt hierarchies
- Token economies
- Antecedent manipulation
- Video Modeling
- Errorless teaching
- Pivotal response training
- Fading
- Shaping

## How does ABA work?

ABA provides 1:1 therapy, initially administered in the home or clinic and is then generalized to other settings. Age and developmentally appropriate learning objectives are created for each child. Hidden Potential provides continual support to parents throughout the process by providing caregiver training, education, and assistance with problem-solving. Additional caregivers, such as babysitters, daycare staff, and teachers can also benefit from participating in the process. When all caregivers and services providers work together toward one goal success is limitless!

Our ABA therapists received comprehensive training in behavioral theory, reinforcement, discrete trial training, prompting and fading, behavior management, generalization, maintenance of acquired skills, interactive play, and social development. In addition, continued education courses and research on new techniques shall be provided to therapists so that they are able to provide quality services. All Registered Behavior Technicians (RBT) or Behavior Assistants (BA) are supervised and trained by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

## Purpose

Our purpose is to serve the needs of children in our community with developmental disabilities. We utilize the scientific principles of applied behavior analysis to create an individualized plan to meet the unique needs of each child and their family. Our goal is to positively impact the lives of each child by teaching functional communication skills, increasing independence, improving social interactions, and improving their overall quality of life.

## Scope

Our staff will provide age and developmentally appropriate instruction based on a comprehensive treatment plan written by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. Hidden Potential is staffed by highly trained professionals who will provide a program that:

- promotes cognitive, emotional, and physical development.
- maximizes the independence and enhances the function and potential of young children.
- provides individualized, quality services to children and their families.
- provides a family-centered program to ensure that each family's priorities, concerns, and cultures are addressed and incorporated into their child's daily activities.
- provides a naturalistic environment where each child's overall development is enhanced and enriched.
- includes children as active participants in their own learning experiences.
- maintains and increases the expertise of staff and quality services by providing opportunities for ongoing professional development.

Hidden Potential is an agency serving individuals with disabilities and behavioral challenges in the state of Florida. We use an individualized, research-based model utilizing the principles of applied behavior analysis to produce lasting changes in the quality of life of the people we serve. Our practice is family-centered and focused on the individual needs of each child. Behavior analysts and behavior technicians provide services directly to families within their scope of training and knowledge. Services are subject to the availability of qualified staff.

The process begins by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) conducting a comprehensive assessment to determine the unique needs of your child and develop interventions specifically designed to reduce maladaptive behaviors and increase more functional skills. This assessment is completed through collaboration with family members, educators, and other services providers, as necessary. The assessment process will include identifying goals and behaviors of concern, completing a review of records and interviews with caregivers, and direct observations of your child. The information gathered during this time will be used to design a program specifically matched to the needs of your child culminating in an individualized behavior support plan. Once services begin, direct intervention is provided to your child to target the goals as determined by the behavior support plan. Training of caregivers using modeling and feedback also occur during the intervention stage. Throughout intervention, data is collected, goals and progress is monitored, and adjustments are made to the plan as needed. Progress is tracked and reported, and services are faded when goals are achieved.

As the child makes progress, responsibility for implementation and monitoring will shift from ABA therapists to the family. This fading process will be gradual and ABA therapists will assist the family as they transition to a reduction of needed services and eventually discharge because the child and family have met goals and no longer require assistance in the form of ABA therapy. During this transition process, other resources and providers will be identified to continue supporting the family as the child grows. This may include, but is not limited to, support groups, mental health counseling, or other specialized therapies.

## Bill of Rights

The human rights of clients and their families are of utmost importance to Hidden Potential and such rights will be respected throughout the time they are served. All persons, regardless of age, sex, race, religious background, ethnic affiliation, orientation, or disability are equal in value and shall be treated accordingly. This organization promotes rights that include, but are not limited to the right to:

- accept or refuse services.

- confidentiality and privacy.
- interactions that are sensitive to his/her culture.
- freedom from physical and psychological abuse and neglect.
- participation in individual planning, decision making, and implementation.
- personal dignity.
- personal safety.
- perform tasks that support physical, mental, or emotional well-being.
- provision of services in the most appropriate, least restrictive environment.
- decline to participate in research.
- internal and external grievance procedures.
- offer complaints and receive timely, appropriate responses.
- receive information in an understandable manner on the results of evaluations, examinations, and treatments.
- religious freedom.
- inspect and review records.
- services will be provided suited to the condition of the individual. This relates but is not limited to: the child/family's right of choice of provider, acknowledgement of goals, incorporating information gathered during the initial skills assessment, and subsequent treatment.

Any allegation that the rights of one of our patients has been violated will be reported to one, or all of the following: Behavioral Health Center of Excellence (BHCOE), Behavior Analysis Certification Board (BACB), your insurance provider., It will also be investigated immediately by the Clinical Director and Supervisory staff member, with written reports of the results and recommendations forwarded to the client and the Owner of Hidden Potential.

*(Appendix A – Bill of Rights for Persons with Developmental Disabilities)*

## **Service Delivery Model**

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) will conduct a comprehensive assessment and develop an individualized treatment plan based on each child's strengths and needs. BCBA will oversee the case throughout treatment providing direct therapy, training and supervision of behavior assistants, parent/guardian training, program modification, data analysis, and treatment plan updates. Behavior assistants (BA) will provide direct services to the child following guidelines outlined in the treatment plan. The BCBA and BA will work closely to ensure fidelity of program implementation and data collection procedures.

## Risks & Benefits

Beginning any new treatment has many benefits, but also has inherent risks. For example, individuals receiving services from Hidden Potential may experience disruptions to their daily life (i.e. new people, changes to routine), stress associated with identifying problematic patterns, learning to respond differently to the child's behavior, frustration at delays in progress, and/or the necessity to modify approaches periodically. These are in addition to risks to privacy and confidentiality that occur when sharing information. Hidden Potential will make every effort to minimize these risks and make services optimally beneficial for all.

## Supervision in the Home/Community Settings

ABA staff are only able to work with children in the home or community settings with an adult caretaker present. At no time, will staff provide services to a child without a designated guardian. If staff arrive and there is no adult present staff will contact the parent, as well as the supervising BCBA. Staff will not enter the home until and unless an adult arrives.

## Family Participation

Family participation is an integral part of the child's treatment plan. Hidden Potential will provide parent/guardian training at a minimum once a month, but more frequent participation in therapy sessions is encouraged. Caregiver goals are included in the child's treatment plan and data will be collected on fidelity of parent/guardian implementation. Parents/guardians are required to participate in their child's program activities. For any child to acquire specific skills, exhibit less problem behavior, and experience generalization to the home or community environments, active parent/guardian and family participation is necessary. Parents/guardians are viewed as active participants in their child's program. If parents/guardians do not meet the minimum standard of monthly training sessions, a team meeting will occur with the BCBA to identify ways to assist the family in more active participation and to overcome any barriers. (See Parent Handbook for more information.)

### **Parent Expectations & Guidelines**

Consistency is important to the success of ABA therapy. To ensure your child receives the best outcomes possible please assist your therapy team by cooperating with the following:

1. The area being used for therapy is a comfortable temperature, well-lit, and relatively free of distractions. It is important that we can conduct the session in a professional manner with materials ready and limited access to competing reinforcers (i.e. toys that are not used during the therapy session).
2. Please do not use therapy materials and reinforcers outside of therapy time. If you would like to run programming with your child, please let us know and we will gladly teach you how to run the programs.
3. The family will follow the treatment plan as requested by the BCBA supervising the case.
4. Implement specific strategies when guided by staff to do so.
5. The family will refrain from assigning duties to the behavior technician implementing programming that are not included in the treatment plan.
6. The family will communicate all concerns (therapy, staff, or child) immediately to the BCBA and will refrain from discussing these concerns with the behavior technician.
7. The family will refrain from seeking consultation advice from the behavior technician regarding behaviors, concerns about programming, and/or treatment rationale.
8. The family will seek consultation from the BCBA for the above concerns to help with consistent and effective communication between team members and the treatment integrity.
9. The family will avoid calling the behavior technician to discuss the program, schedule, or concerns. Calls should be directed to the BCBA or Clinical Director.
10. Please contact the BCBA as soon as possible if you are going to cancel a session. Cancellations should be done at least 24 hours prior to the session start time, but it is best to inform the BCBA as soon as you know about pre-planned absences.
11. The therapist will wait for 15 minutes and attempt to contact the guardian if no one is present upon arrival. After 15 minutes, the therapist may leave. The family is responsible for a late cancellation fee of \$50 due to Hidden Potential. This cannot be billed to insurance. If there is a pattern of cancellations, services are in jeopardy of being terminated.
12. If your family is planning a vacation or will be taking some time off, please inform administration and your BCBA as soon as possible.

13. If your family is planning an extended vacation (more than 2 weeks), please inform administration and your BCBA as soon as possible. We will continue to reserve the spot for your child but cannot guarantee that your child will work with the same therapist. Our therapists are only paid for services rendered.
14. The BCBA will be available to families within normal business hours; however, understand that they may be unable to answer the phone if they are in a session. Calls/messages will be returned within 48 hours. Please contact the office if assistance is needed sooner.
15. Please notify the therapist directly as soon as possible if your child is sick. Please also notify the administration. Sickness includes, but is not limited to, mumps, measles, pin worm, chicken pox, strep throat, lice, diarrhea, rash, foot/mouth disease, pink eye, vomiting, communicable disease, or a temperature over 100 degrees.
16. Parents are asked to use the same guidelines used at school – if a child (or sibling) is too sick to attend school, he/she is too sick to participate in therapy. Therapy will resume as soon as the child's doctor clears him/her of being contagious or the child is symptom-free. If a therapist arrives at the home and the child is sick, the therapist will not be able to work with your child. Specifically, the child must be free of fever and vomiting or diarrhea for a minimum of 24 hours before sessions can resume.
17. The therapist will notify the family if they are going to be arriving more than 5 minutes late.
18. If parent or therapist cancels a session, you may try to reschedule an appointment for a different day or time if it is available.
19. If another client cancels their appointment, we will contact clients on the waiting list on a first come, first call basis.
20. All rescheduled appointments are scheduled through the administration. Families and therapists cannot change appointment times without an agreement with the family and the administration.
21. If impending weather threatens safe travel to and from the session location, Hidden Potential staff may determine it is proper to consider a delayed/early dismissal or rescheduling of services. All communication regarding inclement weather will be communicated to families. If the district schools are closed it is an indication that driving in that area presents danger. The time missed on those days can be made up at the discretion of the therapist and the family.
22. In case of an accident or unusual incident, the therapist should complete an accident form. The family should be contacted immediately, and the Hidden Potential Clinical Director should be informed within 24 hours (see the "Accident Report" form attached).
23. Parents and therapists should be respectful and courteous to each other. Open communication between parents and therapists is essential to the success of your child. All oral and written communication must be done in a courteous and respectful manner. If there are any problems or concerns, please contact the BCBA Supervisor immediately.
24. Parents are encouraged to share with therapists any information that may be helpful in getting to know their child and will enable them to work successfully with your child.
25. Please understand that all information shared is HIPAA protected, it is essential that every Hidden Potential therapist respects and maintains each client's right to confidentiality regarding his/her treatment and all personal information. All HIPAA laws apply. Please do not ask about another client's program or treatment, as this information will not be discussed and could possibly lead to the dismissal of your child from the program.
26. Periodic videotaping of sessions may be helpful in assessing the progress of the child. Prior to a videotaping session, permission must be obtained by all parties involved and can be terminated at any time. Additionally, parents may request a copy of the taped session.



27. Parents must sign each therapist's timesheet to confirm the number of service hours provided at the end of each session. Parents are responsible for ensuring accuracy of hours.
28. No therapy for siblings. Hidden Potential therapists are not obligated to work with siblings. If a therapist feels a sibling can be used as a participant in a session, it is at their discretion.
29. The first 5 minutes of in-home session is used to prepare for the session and set up the environment. If you need a few minutes to talk with the therapist before the session, please let the therapist know, but be aware that your child may be anxious to begin "playing" with the therapist.
30. The last 5 minutes of in-home and school sessions are for the therapist to record data regarding the session. The therapist will share highlights of the session and request your signature verifying the session.
31. During supervision sessions, the supervisor and therapist will review the child's treatment plan to update and incorporate any recommended changes. If parents would like to discuss any issues, please advise the therapist at the beginning of the therapy session. Any time taken for data entry and graphing, program updates, or to discussion of program issues shall be considered billable time.
32. Supervision is required at a minimum of 5% to 20% of the total ABA hours, as per regulations. Hidden Potential requires a minimum of 2 hours of supervision every month.
33. Parents may be asked to purchase materials for programming. This may include, but not limited to, flashcards, workbooks, educational toys, and reinforcers.
34. Payment for our services is expected to occur in a timely manner. If paying privately for services, a written agreement of fees and a billing schedule will be established. Insurance coverage is subject to eligibility and availability of funds (e.g., policy lapses and deductible renewal). Once our services begin, if at any time the client becomes ineligible for insurance, it is your responsibility to notify Hidden Potential immediately to postpone or cancel services until eligibility has been restored. Hours billed to insurance that are not reimbursed due to ineligibility will be directly billed to the guardian and will become their responsibility. Due dates are per invoice. You will be billed once a month for any balances due. We communicate with our clients to resolve past due accounts in all cases. If accounts are more than 2 months overdue, services may be paused.
35. It is inappropriate for our staff to accept money or gifts from clients. Therefore, Hidden Potential discourages caregivers from offering behavior analysts or behavior assistants any additional rewards, including, but not limited to cash, gift cards, gas money, tickets or admission to events, or any other costly items.
35. The therapist is NOT allowed to transport a child in their vehicle for any reason.

### **Admissions, Waitlists, & Discharge**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines and procedures regarding the admission and discharge of clients to Hidden Potential. Additional information and steps may be required to fulfill the requirements of outside funding sources (insurance agencies).

1. Families/Case Managers/Qualified professionals contact the agency regarding admission for services.
2. Families will be provided an agency intake packet to complete.
3. Families are required to also submit supporting documentation including outside reports and evaluations, script for Applied Behavior Analysis therapy from a medical professional, evaluation results indicating diagnosis codes, and copies of insurance card (if applicable and seeking funding through insurance).

4. Families must contact their insurance company to verify benefits for Applied Behavior Analysis services.
5. The intake department will review the intake packet and determine if any potential barriers to service have been identified and the necessary steps to mitigate these barriers.
6. The intake department will review the intake paperwork and determine whether or not the client is an appropriate fit for the agency and ABA services.
7. Pending the initial agency approval, the intake supervisor will reach out to the respective insurance company to obtain preauthorization for assessments (if using insurance funding).
8. Once preauthorization is granted from the respective insurance company the intake supervisor will reach out to the family to establish an initial time for assessment and will assign a Board Certified Behavior Analyst to the case.
9. The Board Certified Behavior Analyst assigned to the intake will complete all required assessments and submit the reports and proposals to the Clinical Director.
10. The Clinical Director and Board Certified Behavior Analyst will review the assessment results and discuss if there are any concerns with the agency providing services. If there are no concerns, the intake department will gain authorization for Applied Behavior Analysis treatment and a treatment team will be assigned to the case.

#### Admission Criterion

Hidden Potential serves children from 12 months to 8 years old who have behavioral challenges that affect their quality of life and impede their daily living skills. This includes children diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder or other developmental delays. Hidden Potential does not provide mental health counseling. Children with a dual diagnosis including a mental health disorder may be treated by Hidden Potential based on the treatment of behaviors observed and utilizing the principles of applied behavior analysis. Mental health counseling may be sought elsewhere, or the family may prefer to focus on a mental health perspective instead of ABA. Hidden Potential will educate the family on the use of ABA to assist the family in making the best choice for their child. Children who participate in therapy with Hidden Potential must be medically stable and able to safely participate. It may be necessary to receive clearance from a medical practitioner prior to participation in therapy sessions to ensure that medical needs have been met.

#### Release of Records

As part of the comprehensive assessment, Hidden Potential may need to access records to ensure our services are coordinated with other programs in which your child may participate. The following documents may be reviewed:

- Insurance information
- Individualized education plans (i.e. 504, IEP, IFSP)
- Previous behavior support plans
- Medical evaluations
- Psychological/educational assessments
- Psychosocial history

I understand that information received by Hidden Potential may include confidential medical data, including psychiatric and/or drug and alcohol usage and references to blood-borne pathogens (e.g., HIV, AIDS). I understand that I may revoke this consent at any time; however, I cannot revoke consent for action that has already been taken and therefore the records may have already been reviewed by Hidden Potential staff. This consent automatically expires 30 days after terminating services. Hidden Potential will adhere to HIPAA Privacy and Security Standards in accessing and storing confidential information and will ask you to sign a release and update it annually.



### Waitlists

If Hidden Potential needs to maintain a waitlist for services, it will do so in an ethical way to ensure access to treatment. Therefore, Hidden Potential will keep clients apprised of his/her status on the waitlist on a weekly basis.

### Discharge & Transition Criterion

- Discharge criterion will be individually decided for clients. However, in general a client would be discharged from ABA services when he/she has had a reduction of problem behavior to zero or near zero levels, have been taught appropriate replacement behaviors that have been maintained for an extended period of time, and has developed skills necessary to function independently in society. When Hidden Potential determines that an individual can no longer be served by this agency, the agency staff shall notify the relevant administrator or designee by telephone and follow-up in writing.
- In all cases following the decision for discharge the administrative team (led by the Clinical Director and supervising BCBA) will hold a meeting with all related parties directly involved with that specific client. This meeting will be held within 30 days, to confirm the discharge of services and arrange for any remedial support or other community resources/wraparound services that may be needed to continue to maintain skills and support. The discharge plan will be reviewed with and signed by the parent/guardian.
- Parties invited for the discharge meeting will include but not be limited to:
  - Client (if applicable)
  - Parent/Guardian
  - Clinical Director
  - Treatment Team
  - All other individuals deemed applicable to the discharge of services
- The supervising BCBA will ensure that all data sheets, graphs, and other documentation is collected from therapists and secured in the client's file. Any materials (i.e. binder, flashcards, toys) loaned for use during therapy will be collected from the home and community settings.
- Clients (parents/guardians) have the right to appeal the decision for discharge from services if he/she is not in agreement. If an appeal is filed and the appellant requests that the individual remain in the current ABA program during that appeal, that request shall be forwarded to the Clinical Director and Executive Director of the agency. The final decision of discharge shall be made by the Executive Director. Notification of this final decision will be provided to all parties involved via certified letter within 48 hours of the decision. Services will continue until a decision is made by the Executive Director.
- When a new provider agency is identified during either transfer or discharge of a client, communication/collaboration will occur between Hidden Potential staff and the new provider as long as appropriate releases are signed. Communication/collaboration will be documented in the client's file. (Also see section on "Transitioning Services".)
- Hidden Potential will continue to provide services to clients for up to 30 days after the discharge to allow time to arrange services with new providers.

### **Payment for Services**

Hidden Potential expects payment for services to occur in a timely manner. If paying privately for services, a written agreement of fees and a billing schedule will be established. Insurance coverage is subject to eligibility and availability of funds (i.e. deductibles, policy lapses). Once our services begin, if at any time the client becomes ineligible for insurance it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify Hidden Potential immediately. It will be up to parent/guardian discretion if they would like to continue services

during the lapse. Any services conducted during this time will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian. A written agreement will be established in this case. Otherwise the family can decide to postpone or suspend services. Any hours billed to the insurance company that are not reimbursed due to ineligibility will become the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

If hours are submitted to the insurance company for reimbursement, the parent/guardian will receive a report via an encrypted email to summarize the hours billed. This report allows the family to ensure that services were provided as reported by the staff member. Families that are paying privately will receive this summary as part of their invoice for services rendered. If there is a discrepancy, please contact Jason at [jason@HiddenPotentialFlorida.com](mailto:jason@HiddenPotentialFlorida.com) to correct the issue.

### **Notice of Withdrawal**

Hidden Potential prefers written notice of intent to withdraw from the program 30 days before the child's last day of attendance. This allows staff members to complete final assessments, compile data, prepare final documents and develop recommendations to aid in the child's transition to the next placement. Without written, 30-days-notice, these documents cannot be prepared promptly and accurately and therefore, Hidden Potential will need an additional 30 days to compile the discharge documents.

### **Communication between Therapists and Home**

Hidden Potential strives to serve each patient effectively and efficiently. ABA staff will provide you with a brief recap of your child's session. Parents/guardians and behavior technicians can share information about the child. To effectively communicate with you, while protecting your information at the same time, we will send all email correspondence that contains any protected health information to you via encrypted email.

#### Cell Phone Use

Staff may use their cell phones to communicate with parent/guardian to discuss therapy-based topics, such as scheduling. No PHI may be shared via portable electronic devices. Devices should be secured with a passcode.

### **Management of Information**

Hidden Potential maintains all client information and documentation in an organized and secure manner. Each client has a binder that contains pertinent information needed during direct therapy sessions (i.e. treatment plan, data sheets, accompanying materials) that is maintained by the supervising BCBA and behavior assistant. The supervising BCBA collects data sheets and secures them in the client's file which is stored in a locked filing cabinet. The client's file also contains all documents and information gathered from the family, assessment documentation, current treatment plan, and data collected throughout treatment period. Any documents that are no longer needed are shredded to maintain confidentiality. Any electronic documents are secured and only accessible with the use of a passcode.

Client files may be removed only by the supervising BCBA or Clinical Director for use to analyze data or update treatment plans. Each time a file is removed, the staff member removing the file will sign the log located in the front of the record and sign it back in upon safe return. If records are transported, the staff member will ensure all documents are secured inside the client's binder or an envelope so all identifying information and PHI is secure and not visible. Records will not be left unattended at any time in an unsecured area.

## Quality Improvement Process:

Hidden Potential is committed to providing the highest quality services to you and your family. To meet this end, we welcome feedback at any time. All staff members receive new hire training, along with education, training, and supervision throughout the time they provide services. Feedback is gathered from staff to determine needs for continuing education topics, individual areas of need related to training and education, as well as anonymous surveys. This information is compiled to guide Hidden Potential in providing comprehensive and thorough support to each team member.

Similarly, families are encouraged to provide feedback to Hidden Potential. Each family should speak to their supervising BCBA to address any areas of concern. The Clinical Director is available to all families if the supervising BCBA is unable to meet the family's needs or the family feels more comfortable. Additionally, Hidden Potential will send out a survey annually. It is important that you complete and return the survey so we may address any areas of need to improve our service delivery.

### Important Contact Information

- Office phone number – 407.800.7711
- Jennifer Blair, Clinical Director - [jennifer@HiddenPotentialFlorida.com](mailto:jennifer@HiddenPotentialFlorida.com)
- Paul Twyford, Executive Director - [paul@HiddenPotentialFlorida.com](mailto:paul@HiddenPotentialFlorida.com)
- Jason Jones, Administrator – [Jason@HiddenPotentialFlorida.com](mailto:Jason@HiddenPotentialFlorida.com)

## Grievance Procedures

Hidden Potential strives to provide the highest standards of care and to meet the needs of its clients and their families. If you are not satisfied with the services you are receiving, please first address your concerns to the supervising BCBA assigned to your family. If the issue cannot be resolved, please contact the Clinical Director, Jennifer Blair or Executive Director, Paul Twyford. The concern will be investigated thoroughly within 30 days and a solution will be proposed. Grievances and their resolutions will be documented and maintained in the client's file.

## Attendance Policy

It is Hidden Potential's primary goal to provide quality and consistent services to our clients. Families must commit to utilizing a minimum of 80% of the medically necessary hours recommended per week. Recommended hours are based on a comprehensive assessment and the professional opinion of the treating BCBA/BCaBA and Clinical Director. While Hidden Potential does not have a maximum number of hours, we do have a minimum threshold to ensure effective and efficient ABA therapy. The minimum hours per week is 10 hours. These standards are in place to ensure maximum progress for your child and family. The recommended treatment hours will be reviewed with you at the completion of the assessment and the treatment team will agree upon utilization and scheduling of hours.

Changes in availability or other schedule changes must be submitted in writing via email 30 days prior to the requested change. There is no guarantee this change will be honored as it is subject to many variables.

Hidden Potential also has a strict cancellation and tardy policy. Our agency recognizes that extraneous circumstances occur that result in disruptions to the regular schedule, and we are sympathetic. Given this, client adherence to the schedule is expected to be at 85% or above. If a client falls below 85% in a given month, a team meeting will be held where the parent/guardian will be advised that if attendance remains below 85% the next month, or any month thereafter, a second meeting will be held, where services will either be reduced, put on hold (until a long-term solution to the variable causing schedule adherence is identified, or terminated. A 14-day notice will be provided if services are terminated.

Additionally, if a client is late on 3 or more occasions within a 4-week period, a team meeting will be held to discuss the issue, problem solve, and identify solutions to overcome the barrier. Late is defined as 8 minutes or more past scheduled session start time. If a client continues to be late, a team meeting will be held to further problem solve or discuss possible termination of services.

Hidden Potential staff are expected to attend sessions as scheduled arriving in a timely manner and informing families as soon as possible if an unavoidable cancellation must occur. Staff will remain on time to sessions and will call the family if they will be more than 5 minutes late.

A cancellation fee of \$50 will be charged for all no-call, no-show sessions and cancellations with less than 24-hour notice, other than cancellation due to illness. This fee will cover the travel and inconvenience for staff who experience the cancellation.

## Health Checks

Health Care checks will be conducted on any child whom staff believes may be sick or exhibits signs or symptoms of illness. Please communicate changes in your child's sleeping, eating, or drinking patterns, any concerns you identify about your child, any cuts/bruises or injuries received since staff last saw them and any follow-up care needed. We are also looking to make sure all the children are healthy and can engage in services for the day. Health Checks may involve staff gently feeling the child's cheek, forehead, or neck, checking to see if the child is unusually warm, cold, or clammy; visually observing the child's arms, legs, chest, and back, checking for changes in skin color, bruising, swelling, cuts, sores, or rashes; and observed for severe coughing, discharge from eyes or nose and for any signs of breathing difficulty. The child's temperature may be taken. Staff will discuss with parents/guardians if any findings cause concern or if the child's session should be cancelled for the day.

## Illness

The goal of the illness policy is to ensure all the children are healthy and able to participate in therapy. This safeguards the health and safety of all children and adults. To that end, any child exhibiting symptoms during a 24-hour period prior to a scheduled session should reschedule the session until all symptoms have been absent for 24 hours. A note from the child's doctor may be required if more than 3 sessions have been cancelled. A doctor's release is required to return following a communicable disease. Illness includes, but not limited to the following:

- Temperature above 100
- Mumps
- Pin Worm
- Ring Worm
- Communicable Disease
- Measles
- Lice
- Diarrhea
- Rash
- Pink Eye
- Strep Throat
- Staph Infection
- Chicken Pox
- Vomit

If your child or a household member is experiencing symptoms listed on the CDC's COVID-19 symptom list, they must be system free for at least 48 hours, have a negative PCR test, or a note from a doctor confirming no contagious symptoms. If a child or a member of their household tests positive for COVID-19, sessions will be canceled until 5 days have passed or has a doctor's note confirming the safe return to therapy.

An updated list of COVID-19 symptoms can be found online at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>.

Parents/guardian are asked to use the same guidelines used in schools and daycare centers. If a child is too sick to attend school or daycare then he/she is too sick to participate in his/her ABA therapy session. ABA therapy will resume as soon as the child's doctor clears him/her of being contagious or the child is symptom-free for specified time above. If a therapist arrives for a session and the child is sick, the therapist will not be able to work with the child.

It is our policy that parents/guardians must notify staff in advance if your child is sick as soon as possible, preferably the evening before the session if you know that your child will not be able to participate in the ABA program the next day.

## **Safe Work Environment**

At Hidden Potential, we are committed to maintaining the safety of our clients and staff. Our BCBA's and behavior assistants will not enter or work in environments that pose a significant risk to safety. These settings include environmental hazards, such as weapons, dangerous chemicals, or unsafe structures, and settings in which individuals/residents are using narcotics or engaging in violent or threatening behavior. If any staff member feels threatened or uncomfortable during therapy sessions, they should immediately leave the situation and report the concern to the Clinical and Executive Directors.

## **Infection Control**

Hidden Potential understands the importance of safety and caution in relation to infection control. It is imperative that families report any known infectious diseases to Hidden Potential during the assessment process or as soon as the information becomes known. If an infectious disease is identified, the supervising BCBA and Clinical Director will research precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and any other appropriate resource to develop protocol to meet the unique needs of the situation. A plan would be developed, and both staff and family would be educated and trained on the plan to ensure the safety of the child, family, and staff.

All staff are committed to providing a safe, clean environment for each family. Each staff member receives training during orientation to ensure they uphold Hidden Potential's high standards for cleanliness and safety. Any personal items brought by the therapist (i.e. toys, books, pencils) for use during the session will be thoroughly sanitized before and after session with a disinfecting agent. When possible, items will be assigned to children eliminating the need to share. Staff will wash their hands before and after sessions, as well as during sessions, as needed. Additional hand washing and/or disinfecting will occur:

- After staff/child coughs or sneezes
- Before eating/feeding programs
- After child wipes nose or put fingers in mouth
- If child puts toy in mouth

Additionally, staff will wear a face mask during sessions if requested by the family. See additional procedures related to infection control in the "Management of Hazardous Materials" section.

### Infectious Disease Reporting

Hidden Potential adheres to state and federal guidelines outlined by the department of health in reporting confirmed and suspected cases of infectious disease. If any member of Hidden Potential's team or a caregiver suspects or confirms infectious disease in an individual, they are obligated to report it to their local health department or the Bureau of Epidemiology 24/7 at 850.245.4401.

If impending weather threatens safe travel to and from the session location, Hidden Potential staff may determine it is proper to consider a delayed/early dismissal or rescheduling of services. Staff and families

should pay close attention to the news to monitor if travel is safe. Either before or after a storm, travel may be dangerous, and it is left to the staff members discretion if it is safe to travel. All communication regarding inclement weather will be communicated to families and the supervising BCBA. Services will be resumed once it is deemed safe. The supervising BCBA will contact the family to discuss resuming services and scheduling makeup sessions if applicable. If services are interrupted for more than a few days, staff may consider telehealth as an option. There are 2 important criteria to keep in mind when considering the use of telehealth:

1. The supervising BCBA must determine if the client can reasonably benefit from services rendered in this manner.
2. Telehealth must be approved by your insurance company (if applicable).

If Hidden Potential staff are providing services in the home or community setting when severe weather arises, staff will immediately seek appropriate shelter to ensure the safety of themselves, the child, and the family. If necessary, staff will contact emergency assistance. All efforts to listen to emergency information and alerts via radio, TV, or cell phone will be taken if possible. Staff and clients shall remain in place until it is safe to leave.

While all care is taken by staff to ensure documentation is protected from loss or damage if this occurs it will be immediately reported to the Clinical Director. Any damaged documentation will be saved, and restoration will be attempted.

## **Collaboration**

Hidden Potential facilitates and encourages communication and collaboration with other service providers and individuals in the child's life throughout enrollment in the program. A copy of any assessment completed by another provider (i.e. occupational/physical/speech therapy, medical reports) will be placed in the client's file where it will be accessible to all staff and the family. Coordinated efforts across all environments will aid in the child's overall success. This also assists in eliminating duplication of effort and ensures an adequate transition plan is in place for when the child leaves the program. To collaborate with other providers and individuals, Hidden Potential requires the primary caregiver to complete an "Authorization for Release of Information and Records" form. These release forms are valid for one year from completion, unless revoked sooner. You will be notified in advance of any such collaboration with outside or 3rd party service providers or professionals.

## **Administering Medications**

Hidden Potential shall not be responsible for the administration of medication to a child during treatment sessions. Any medications that must be administered during session times will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian or caregiver in charge at the time.

## **Crisis Management**

Hidden Potential understands the nature of the challenges our clients face and know it is not uncommon for a child to engage in behavior that puts him/herself or others at risk. If this occurs, the crisis will be managed using the least intrusive and safest strategies possible. Hidden Potential makes every effort to avoid this type of behavior and to respond quickly to address problems as soon as they arrive. If the caregivers and staff are unable to manage the behavior safely, they will call 911 and/or seek assistance from another professional. If medical attention is required, the caregiver will need to provide transportation. Specific crisis management procedures will be incorporated into your child's behavior support plan if necessary.



## **Mandated Reporting of Suspected Abuse or Neglect**

All staff at Hidden Potential are held to uphold Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes which mandates that any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, neglected, or abandoned by a parent/guardian, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare shall immediately report such knowledge or suspicion to the Florida Abuse Hotline of the Department of Children and Families.

## **Photographs/Videotaping**

Hidden Potential staff may wish to take photographs or videos to use for program development, data collection, or training purposes. Additionally, media could be utilized for outside training purposes or marketing. Parents/guardians must give consent and complete the appropriate authorization form. Consent may be revoked at any time.

## **Professionalism**

Hidden Potential is committed to creating a safe, respectful environment that is family-centered and based on child-first practices. Relationships between staff members and clients are intended to set limits and clearly define a safe, therapeutic connection, putting the needs, goals, and program of the child first. Professional boundaries will always be maintained between staff members and clients so that appropriate services are provided. Without professional boundaries it becomes difficult to remain objective in programming decisions and child may not receive appropriate treatment. These boundaries will be maintained throughout the treatment process. Dual relationships are not allowed with clients. Dual relationships occur when a therapist has some form of interaction with a client outside of the treatment environment. Any personal information revealed will be relevant to the child's treatment.

## **Gifts**

As part of the ethics code created and governed by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board, staff are not able to gifts from or give gifts to clients because this constitutes a multiple relationship. Gifts would include anything that is of monetary value, large or small. Because of the nature of our job as a helping profession, many well-meaning clients and family members want to show appreciation through a gift card, plate of cookies, or handmade item. Typically, these gifts are tokens of respect and appreciation and may not cause any problems. In some cases, however, the exchanging of gifts can open a complicated set of boundary and relationship issues.

## **Social Media**

Hidden Potential staff members are prohibited from engaging in any social media relationship with children and/or families. This is to ensure privacy as well as to respect the professional boundaries of the relationship between staff and client families. Limited interaction is allowed via Hidden Potential's social media sites. Hidden Potential reserves the right to limit or remove any information, posting, links or comments made on Hidden Potential's social media sites at their sole discretion.

All staff members of Hidden Potential are expected to conduct themselves in a manner reflecting the high standards of our profession in all social media outlets. Posts including hate speech, threats of violence, harassment, or discrimination violate our code of ethics and possibly the law.

## Allergies

Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying staff, in writing, of any allergies or other medical conditions upon enrollment or as the parent/guardians become aware of them.

Hidden Potential thanks you for choosing us to help support your child and family! We are committed to providing the high-quality service your child deserves. We welcome all feedback and look forward to collaborating with you during this journey.