

# *Antecedent Based Interventions* **commonwealth** > > **autism**

by Briana Judd, MS, BCBA, LBA &

Danielle Kessinger, M.Ed., BCBA, LBA

Antecedent Based Interventions (ABI) are a type of behavioral intervention designed to prevent challenging behavior. With ABI, we assess conditions of an environment, such as the location, materials, noise level, instructions, and people present. We also assess consequences that are reinforcing interfering behavior, such as the delivery of a desired item after a problem behavior occurs. The goal of ABI is to modify the environmental conditions and the timing of consequences that were previously evoking and reinforcing challenging behavior.

## *Five Antecedent Based Interventions*

**1**

### **Environmental Arrangement**

Structural components, such as labels, specific areas for activities, and physical boundaries may help clients understand their environment and may promote independence. Labels are helpful as using them minimizes the need for repeated verbal prompting from the parent or caregiver. Specific areas designated for specific activities may help a child learn what behaviors are acceptable in an area (Break area for relaxing vs. Desk for Academic Work).

**2**

### **Instructions & Rules**

Providing a description of expectations or directions for individuals can be an effective way to modify the environment. Some of the ways you can teach Instructions and rules are through verbal, written, or pictorial instruction.

Some tips to consider when implementing instruction and rules include:

1. Determine when "rules" are not being followed
2. Develop rules at individual's comprehension level ensuring they are concise and observable
3. Teach the rules directly
4. Provide support as needed
5. Evaluate the instruction and rules to make sure they are occurring across multiple settings (environment, people, materials).

**3**

### **Using Structured Schedules**

Structured schedules, also known as routines, include the physical arrangement of space and materials while taking into consideration the organization of activities. The goal of routines is to provide predictability through the client's day.

When building routines, we are looking to build a healthy social environment that fosters independence as well as interaction. Schedules include structured segments of time, preparation for changes, and minimization of downtime.

Benefits of these procedures occur when schedules are used consistently.

**4**

### **Providing Choices**

Teaching choice making skills has many benefits. Providing choices can help an individual identify personal preferences, increase their ability to access preferred activities, increase activity levels, and can reduce problem behavior. Choices can be provided by offering available choices verbally, through written words, or from a pictorial array of choices.

**5**

### **Non-Contingent Reinforcement (NCR)**

The goal of Non-Contingent Reinforcement (NCR) is to find the reinforcer that is maintaining a problem behavior and provide that specific reinforcer on a time-based schedule throughout the day. This procedure is theorized to enrich the environment by providing non-contingent access to that reinforcer. Therefore, the individual will no longer have to work to gain access to the reinforcer by exhibiting problem behavior. For example, if an individual is seeking attention regularly by throwing a tantrum, we would provide scheduled attention throughout the day to enrich the environment.

**For more resources, check out our Best Practice Blog at  
[www.autismva.org/bestpractice](http://www.autismva.org/bestpractice)**