ALABA 2026

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OCTOBER 8TH – 9TH



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ABOUT ALABA

The Alabama Association for Behavior Analysis was founded in 1992 to promote the ethical, humane, and effective application of behavior principles in all segments of Alabama society, including education, rehabilitation, developmental disabilities, business, industry, and government.

ALABA is a membership-based organization that provides an annual convention as a forum for presentation of scientific and technological achievements. The association is a chapter of the Association for Behavior Analysis International and affiliate of the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts.

The Alabama Association for Behavior Analysis (ALABA) serves as a scientific and professional reference group that embraces the principles and practices of behavior analysis. Our goal is to promote research that will advance the understanding of behavior and to identify and promote the use of effective and humane behavioral procedures that meet the educational and habilitative needs of individuals. In addition, ALABA strives to serve as a resource for political, legislative, and policy-making bodies in Alabama in ways that support the scientific and professional interests of behavior analysis.

CANCELLATION & CEU INFORMATION

Cancellations and Refunds

Cancellations are subject to a 25% cancellation fee. All refund requests must be submitted to AlabamaABA@gmail.com by 10/9/2026. A substitute participant may be designated in place of the registrant who is unable to attend. For more information, contact us at AlabamaABA@gmail.com.

Continuing Education Units (CEUs)

ALABA offers CEUs for BCBA-Ds/BCBAs/BCaBAs. CEUs are purchased as a package in the BehaviorLive app for $120 ($10/CEU). If you didn't purchase CEUs when you registered, you can add them after the conference. To receive a CEU for an event, you must have documentation indicating you attended the entire event (e.g., scan in/out of BehaviorLive app, note with ALABA official). To receive CEUs for viewing an event while livestreaming or from a recording, you will need to pass the quiz associated with the presentation. If you have any questions, contact us at AlabamaABA@gmail.com.

2026 ALABA PRESIDENT-ELECT



Dr. Grommet joined The Arc of Central Alabama in July 2023. His goals are to recruit, develop, support, and retain excellent behavior support professionals; increase the Behavior Support Department's positive impact on the people we serve's lives; and guide the department's expansion to research and clinical training. Before joining The Arc, Dr. Grommet was at Troy University, where he designed and coordinated the Applied Behavior Analysis Master of Science. He earned his Psychology Ph.D. (Behavior Analysis Training Area) at the City University of New York's Graduate Center. He also completed the Intellectual and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Postdoctoral Fellowship at Nationwide Children's Hospital, Ohio State University. He is a board certified behavior analyst (doctoral level), licensed behavior analyst, and licensed psychologist. Dr. Grommet serves on the American Psychological Association's Division 25 (Behavior Analysis), the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council, and as a reviewer for behavior-analytic journals. He also has published peer-reviewed studies on learning and behavior analysis.

INVITED SPEAKERS



William H. Ahearn, an ABAI Fellow, serves as the Director of Research at the New England Center for Children and as Adjunct Faculty for the Western New England University's Master's and Doctoral programs in Behavior Analysis. Previously he served as Clinical Assistant Professor in the Master's in Applied Behavior Analysis program at Northeastern University, as a Researcher at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine and as Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry in the School of Medicine at the University of Massachusetts, Worcester (while collaborating with researchers from the E.K Shriver Center). He received his doctorate in experimental psychology at Temple University in 1992 under the advisement of Phil Hineline and completed a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Behavioral Psychology at the Kennedy Krieger Institute and Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Bill's research interests are varied and include peer reviewed publications on treating pediatric feeding disorders, teaching verbal and social skills, examining implications of the Behavioral Momentum metaphor, and exploring aspects of autistic behavior. However, his most cited work is on assessing and treating automatically reinforced behavior, specifically, repetitive behavior and restricted interests. Bill and his colleagues have developed a form of redirection referred to as response interruption and redirection (RIRD) which has been identified by the National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice (https://ncaep.fpg.unc.edu/) as one of 27 evidence-based practices for treating autism. He has collaborated with many notable behavioral researchers including Bill Dube, Bill McIlvane, Tony Nevin, Mike Cataldo, Gina Green, Caio Miguel, and Becky MacDonald. Many of these collaborations were grant funded. He has published over 100 papers in outlets including the Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior, Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, Behavior Modification, Animal Learning and Behavior, The Lancet, Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, The Behavior Analyst, and Behavioral

Interventions. He currently serves as the Editor-in-Chief of Behavioral Interventions and on the Board of Editors for the Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior. He previously served on the Board of Editors for the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis for about 20 years. Bill has also reviewed for a variety of other outlets, most notably Pediatrics. Bill has provided extensive service throughout his career. He has provided service for BABAT (Board member, President, chair of Professional Practice, ACE); APBA (Board member, President); BACB (Subject Matter Expert, Exam Reviewer); ABAI (Autism track coordinator); CASP (various workgroups); ONTABA; and, Autism Speaks (training workgroup leader for the development of the challenging behavior toolkit). As BABAT's chair of Professional Practice, Bill organized BABAT's efforts relative to licensure in Massachusetts. After licensure was signed into law, he was appointed as an Applied Behavior Analyst member of the Allied Mental Health and Human Services Professions board in 2013. Subsequently, Bill was appointed chair of this omnibus board by both a Democratic and Republican Governor and continues to serve as the Acting Chair of this board.



Dr. Jennifer Bruzek is an Associate Professor, Director of Human Sciences, and Program Coordinator for the M.S. in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH). A Board Certified Behavior Analyst–Doctoral (BCBA-D) and Licensed Behavior Analyst, she holds an M.Ed. from Temple University and a Ph.D. in Applied Behavioral Science from the University of Kansas, and completed postdoctoral training at Vanderbilt University. Her research focuses on infant crying and caregiving, specifically examining caregiver responses through experimental studies of negative reinforcement and computer-based simulations. Her work is published in leading journals, including the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, and *Perspectives on Behavior Science*. Dr. Bruzek is the Program Area Coordinator for Lifespan Behavioral Development for the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) annual convention and is a past President of the Alabama Association for Behavior Analysis. Since joining UAH in 2019, Dr. Bruzek has led the ABA graduate program to significant milestones, including ABAI Tier 2a recognition in 2025 and a 100% first-time BCBA exam pass rate in 2024. She received UAH's 2025 Outstanding Faculty Member Award for the College of Education, Sport, and Human Sciences.



Ansley received a dual Bachelor of Arts in Deaf Education and Elementary Education from Flagler College and a Master of Science and Ph.D. in Applied Behavior Analysis from the Florida Institute of Technology (FIT). Over the last twenty-plus years, Ansley has accumulated a variety of clinical work experiences, including founding an ABA-based school, running an early intervention clinic, working with adults in group homes and community settings, consulting nationally and internationally, and teaching. For the last twelve years, Ansley has served as Nemours Children's Health's first behavior analyst with the goal of embedding behavior analysis in a hospital setting. At Nemours, she is part of a multi-disciplinary assessment team for children with complex medical conditions and intellectual disabilities; she also leads an ABA team in providing services to children and parents. As part of her role, Ansley uses ABA to train the administrative teams, medical residents, medical students, and other medical divisions on the utility and value of our science. She is on the editorial board for the Journal of Organizational Behavior Management and a reviewer of the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis. Finally, she has published over 20 articles and book chapters and secured over $5 million in grant funding.



Dr. Heather Jones is a board-certified behavior analyst, special education teacher, and instructional leader with over 15 years of experience working in the field. She has worked with individuals ages 3-21 in both clinical and public-school settings specializing in severe behavior. She has served as an adjunct professor for the University of Alabama in the College of Education, Department of Special Education and Multiple Abilities. She serves on the executive board of the Alabama Association for Behavior Analysis, the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC), and is the AIACC school-age (6-13) subgroup leader. She has presented workshops and posters at the local, state, and national levels.



Heather M. McGee is a Professor of Psychology and Chair of the Industrial/Organizational Behavior Management graduate programs at Western Michigan University (WMU). She received her B.S. (1998), M.A. (2003), and Ph.D. (2004) from WMU. Dr. McGee has designed, developed and implemented organizational performance solutions in a variety of industries and settings, including autism service agencies, the pharmaceutical industry, education, and health and human services. These solutions have included performance-based instruction, performance management, behavioral systems changes, and lean sigma initiatives. Dr. McGee is the former Executive Director of the Organizational Behavior Management (OBM) Network and serves as an associate editor for the Journal of Organizational Behavior Management (JOBM). Additionally, she serves on the Board of Directors for Intermountain Centers for Human Development.



Maithri Sivaraman is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She is a behavior analyst with over 10 years of experience providing ABA services, conducting research, and teaching. She received her Ph.D. in Psychology from Ghent University in Belgium at the Research in Developmental Differences Lab. Her research focuses on early language acquisition in neurotypical and neurodivergent children with an emphasis on the social and instructional contexts that facilitate speech development and generative language in young children. Her research has been recognized as Top Cited papers in the field's flagship journals including the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* and the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*. Most recently, her work was awarded the Joseph Brady Significant Research Contribution Award. She currently serves as an Associate Editor for the Psychological Record and as a Treasurer for the Association for Science in Autism Treatment. Prior to her current position, Maithri established the Tendrils Centre for Autism in Chennai, India offering behavioral services. She also serves as a consultant for multiple early intervention centers in India and Europe.



Andressa Sleiman earned her Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Florida. She received her B.A. in Psychology from Florida International University and her M.S. in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Organizational Behavior Management (OBM) from the Florida Institute of Technology. Andressa specializes in Organizational Behavior Management (OBM), which applies the science of behavior to organizations to increase productivity, safety, and staff satisfaction. Andressa has published over 20 articles and book chapters in scientific journals. Her primary research interests include behavioral safety, healthcare procedural adherence and related outcomes, and conditions that promote feedback effectiveness. In addition to research, she is passionate about teaching undergraduates and graduate students about organizational behavior management and behavior analysis.



Dr. Amelia Spencer joined the Glenwood team in July 2024, bringing a deep passion for inclusive education and a strong background in early childhood development. She holds a Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education and has extensive experience working with young children with exceptionalities. Throughout her career, Dr. Spencer has been dedicated to both direct service and teacher preparation—mentoring and equipping pre-service teachers to become effective, compassionate special education professionals. She spent 15 years teaching at Birmingham-Southern College in the field of Special Education, where she guided future educators in supporting diverse learners. At Glenwood, Dr. Spencer serves as both the Program Evaluation Analyst and Director of the Kindergarten Program, blending data-driven insights with a child-centered approach to create a nurturing, effective learning environment. Her commitment to excellence in education and advocacy for students with autism and other behavioral challenges shapes the foundation of Glenwood's kindergarten program.



Dr. Chelsea Taylor has been working in the field of autism for over 10 years providing direct services to children and families in various capacities. From the Alabama Early Intervention System, private practice, to the State of Alabama, she has gained much knowledge and practice working with those who have and are affected by autism spectrum disorder. In her current role, she aims to ensure that families in Alabama not only have access to care and interventions but also that they have the needed tools to continue the care in home.



Ben Witts is a professor in the Behavioral Health and Counseling department and in the Applied Behavior Analysis master's programs at St. Cloud State University in Minnesota, USA. His research interests center on gambling, infant crying as stimulus-object and as stimulus-function, the prevention of abusive head traumas in infants, and whatever his thesis students are interested in. He has received awards for his research and teaching, including a Minnesota State Outstanding Educator Award and the ABAI Outstanding Mentor Award. He currently serves as the Board Coordinator for the ABAI Accreditation Board. Academically, his greatest achievements are the successes of his students, who represent every inhabited continent.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2026
CONFERENCE SESSIONS

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM **PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS** **CEUs Offered: 1**

Understanding Behavior, Expanding Responsibility

ERICH GROMMET, Ph.D. (Arc of Central Alabama)

Behavior analysts are trained to understand behavior and the environmental conditions under which it occurs. While they often apply this knowledge to assessment, treatment, and consultation, its implications extend beyond direct clinical practice. Over the course of their careers, many behavior analysts assume roles such as supervising practitioners, mentoring students, developing programs, collaborating across disciplines, serving professional organizations, and helping develop the systems through which behavioral services are delivered. This presidential address reflects on how a scientific understanding of behavior has informed one behavior analyst's evolving view of professional responsibility. Drawing on experiences in direct support, academia, clinical practice, organizational leadership, and professional service, the presentation explores how behavior analysts can remain grounded in behavioral science while broadening their impact through teaching, mentorship, interdisciplinary collaboration, and stewardship of the environments in which people live and work. Rather than offering a blueprint for organizational or societal change, the address encourages attendees to consider how the principles of behavior analysis can inform the many roles they occupy throughout their careers. Ultimately, it argues that behavior analysts strengthen the profession not only through direct clinical work but also by thoughtfully designing the environments in which clients, colleagues, organizations, and future generations of practitioners operate.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe how a scientific understanding of behavior and its environmental determinants may inform professional responsibility
2. Identify examples of how behavior analysts influence behavior through supervision, education, interdisciplinary collaboration, professional service, and other indirect pathways
3. Discuss opportunities to strengthen behavior analysis by fostering collaboration among researchers, educators, practitioners, and professional organizations

10:10 AM - 11:10 AM **CEUs Offered: 1**

A Systems Approach to Strategic Planning

Heather McGee, Ph.D. (Western Michigan University)

Organizations in growth industries, such as ABA, often find that organizational opportunities and threats lie around every corner. Strategic planning has the potential to provide a framework for organizations to analyze and take action on those opportunities and threats. All too often, though, strategic planning events end up providing the organization with a pretty report and not much else. Using Behavioral Systems Analysis (BSA) in strategy implementation efforts can help organizations not only set strategic goals, but also build an execution plan that outlines the necessary actions to be taken at every step along the way to goal achievement. This presentation will outline how BSA can be used to improve strategy implementation efforts and achieve strategic goals.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Write (or rewrite) strategic goals as S.M.A.R.T. goals
2. Use a systems framework to identify the organizational systems and structures that impact and are impacted by a strategic goal
3. Use systems tools to identify organizational gaps and barriers to successful strategy implementation, as well as solutions to close the gaps and overcome the barriers

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2026 (cont.)

11:20 AM - 12:20 PM **CEUs Offered: 1**

Beyond the Island: The Evolving Role and Expanding Capacity of the School-Based Behavior Analyst

HEATHER JONES, Ed.D., BCBA, LBA (Hoover School System)

Behavior analysis is experiencing rapid growth within public education, driven by shifting national data, state funding initiatives, and an increased demand for evidence-based behavioral support. Because schools represent a universal experience for individuals ages 6 to 21, they offer an unparalleled setting for behavior analysts to fulfill their ethical mandate to disseminate the science to the public. However, navigating the public school system requires a fundamental shift in practice. This presentation will explore the evolution of the school-based BCBA, tracing the journey from historically reactive roles—such as due process and manifestation determinations—to modern, proactive frameworks designed to build systemic capacity. Despite the universal need for behavioral support, data indicates that BCBAs remain largely isolated to special education and are underutilized in general education settings. To bridge this gap, the discussion will cover day-to-day practicalities—from navigating IEP meetings, FBAs, and staff consultation—to emerging frontiers such as supervising in-school RBTs, aligning ABA with restorative practices, and expanding FBA methodologies. Ultimately, this talk aims to equip practitioners with the competencies needed to thrive in educational settings, actionable strategies for collaboration to increase student success, and an exploration of future opportunities for disseminating ABA in schools.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Outline the specific roles and responsibilities of school-based BCBAs, contrasting the expectations of contract versus full-time positions and their evolution over time
2. Describe specific ways to gain competency to work in educational settings
3. Analyze data regarding the current presence of ABA in schools and develop actionable strategies for systemic capacity building and future dissemination opportunities

LUNCH BREAK 12:20 – 1:20PM

1:15 PM – 2:00 PM **No CEUs Offered**

POSTER SESSION & DATA SHARING

Clinical/Applied Poster Submissions:

Reducing PRN Chemical Restraints in a Residential Setting
Amanda Niedfeld, Cory Johnson, Paul Agostini, & Mary-Kate Carey (Glenwood)

Effects of Behavioral Skills Training on a Human Service Staff Member's Schedule Use with Adults with Intellectual Disabilities
Zach Hooten, Erich Grommet, Carmen Britton, & Esteban Cabassa Mikimen (Arc of Central Alabama)

Effective Caregiver Training: Evaluating the Effects of Didactic Instruction and Behavioral Skills Training on Caregiver Implementation Fidelity
Hunter Berkeley (Johns Hopkins University)

Student Poster Submissions:

Undergraduates Assistants Feedback on Behavior-Analytic Training and Work Experience in a Juvenile Residential Treatment Facility
Taylor Turnquist (Auburn University)

Effects of the Good Behavior Game on Off-Task Behavior in a Second-Grade Classroom
Keisha Barnett & Laura Senn (University of Alabama Huntsville)

Response Dynamics of a SARSA Algorithm Across Hyperparameters
Caleb Spink & John Michael Falligant (Auburn University)

Comparing the Effects of C/T Ratios in Eyeblink Conditioning Study
Paul Kornman, John Walker, Caleb Spink, Kahlan Eversole, Aryn Skomsky, Nadia Roberts, Kate Smith, Sara George, & John Michael Falligant (Auburn University)

Number of Schedules and Analysis of Matching Parameters From a Single-Key Procedure
Kahlan Eversole, Amber Hallmark, Caleb Spink, Kate Smith, Sara George, Amelia Evans, Bryan Klapes, & John Michael Falligant (Auburn University)

Increasing Independent Manding Through Progressive Time Delay and Caregiver-Implemented Training
Sophe Johnston, Kelsie Salcan, Chiaya Swain, & Mary-Kate Carey (University of Alabama Huntsville)

A Comparison of Two Treatments for Problem Behavior Related to Interruption
Chiaya Swain, Kelsie Salcan, Sophe Johnston, & Mary-Kate Carey (University of Alabama Huntsville)

Teaching Eye Gaze to Individuals With Autism Spectrum Disorder: An Evaluation of Performance Criteria and Effects on Generalization
Sasha Long, Delaney Smith, Ryan Rose Hatch, & Sarah Richling (Auburn University)

Using Eye Tracking to Evaluate Emotion Recognition in Justice-involved Youth
Ellile Moroshok & John Rapp (Auburn University)

We encourage all attendees to participate in this year's poster competition by voting for the "People's Choice" poster award! Poster winners will receive a $50 Visa gift card and free registration to the 2027 ALABA Conference! Poster awards will also be given for the best student poster and the best clinical/applied poster.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2026 (cont.)

2:10 PM - 3:10 PM **CEUs Offered: 1**

Moving from Instructional Trials to Functional and Meaningful Language With RFT

MAITHRI SIVARAMAN, Ph.D. (Teachers College, Columbia University)

A persistent challenge in language instruction involves increasing the yield of instructional time and promoting generative learning by producing untaught and lasting outcomes. Relational frame theory (RFT) offers a comprehensive framework to approach this challenge. In my talk, I will describe how to use RFT's framework to produce generative and meaningful language, drawing on recent studies with young children with and without developmental disabilities. I will describe specific assessment procedures spanning across coordination and distinction relations ("same vs. different"), comparative relations ("bigger/smaller", "more than/less than"), and spatial relations ("top/bottom") to identify areas needing instruction. I will then explain the use of Multiple Exemplar Instruction targeting various types of speaker and listener response topographies in establishing relational responding, with procedures to test generalization across stimuli and trial types. Finally, I will focus on ways to transfer these improvements to children's spontaneous language use during picture description trials and block play.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe various types of relational responding
2. Describe an assessment strategy for measuring relational responding
3. Apply multiple exemplar instruction to teach relational responding

3:20 PM - 4:20 PM **CEUs Offered: 1**

Cultivating Student-Generated Questions in Young Children With Autism

AMELIA SPENCER, Ph.D. (Glenwood)

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and significant behavioral challenges often rely on adults to direct interactions, answer questions, and solve problems. Limited spontaneous questioning can reduce opportunities for communication, self-advocacy, social engagement, and flexible thinking. Each of these skills directly impact behavior and independence. Teaching students to ask meaningful questions creates opportunities to increase communication, decrease prompt dependence, and build cognitive flexibility. This presentation shares findings from a 14-week intervention conducted at Glenwood Kindergarten with children ages 4–7 with autism and complex behavioral needs. Using an adapted teaching strategy, Question Formulation Technique (QFT), students demonstrated substantial growth in both the frequency and sophistication of their spontaneous questions. As questioning increased, students became more engaged, initiated more peer interactions, demonstrated greater persistence during problem solving, and showed increased independence during inquiry-based activities. Researchers also observed a powerful peer-modeling effect in which one student's curiosity frequently prompted collaborative questioning and discussion among classmates. Participants will leave with practical, evidence-based strategies that can be immediately incorporated into behavioral and educational programming, including: o The Twenty Questions Bridge: Using a highly structured game to teach categorization, discrimination, and flexible thinking while increasing spontaneous verbal behavior. o Two-Session QFT Implementation: Separating question generation from investigation to reduce cognitive demands and support students who benefit from predictable routines. o High-Interest Q-Focus Materials: Using novel, surprising, or sensory-rich objects to evoke curiosity and naturally increase communication initiations. o Visual and Behavioral Supports: Incorporating visual question stems, icons, modeling, reinforcement, and extended wait time to increase independent question asking while reducing adult prompting. This session demonstrates how teaching children to ask questions can be

conceptualized as more than an academic or language objective. It can be a functional behavioral intervention targeting spontaneous verbal behavior, communication initiation, social engagement, and independence. By intentionally arranging antecedents, providing appropriate prompts and reinforcement, and systematically fading adult support, practitioners can create more opportunities for students to initiate rather than respond. Ultimately, the goal is to help students become more active agents in their environment, asking, investigating, problem solving, and accessing information independently rather than relying on adults to direct every interaction.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize the role of spontaneous questioning in developing communication, independence, and cognitive flexibility
2. Identify ways to promote curiosity, peer interaction, and independent problem-solving through intentional questioning
3. Describe how increasing spontaneous questioning can support communication, social engagement, cognitive flexibility, and independence in children with autism and complex behavioral needs

4:30 PM – 5:30 PM **CEUs Offered: 1**

Studying Infant Crying: Lessons for Conducting Behavior-Analytic Research on Complex, Socially Significant Behavior

JENNIFER BRUZEK, Ph.D., BCBA-D (University of Alabama Huntsville) and **Benjamin Witts, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA** (St. Cloud University)

Infant crying is a developmentally appropriate behavior that plays an important role in caregiver-infant communication; however, persistent or inconsolable crying can contribute to caregiver stress and increase the risk of abusive caregiving. Despite its social significance, crying has received limited attention in behavior-analytic research. Studying crying poses unique methodological and ethical challenges, including balancing experimental control with ecological validity, distinguishing typical developmental behavior from clinically significant concerns, and collaborating with professionals across disciplines such as medicine and social work. This presentation describes lessons learned from conducting behavior-analytic research on crying and discusses how these experiences can inform the study of other complex, socially significant behaviors beyond traditional areas of emphasis in behavior analysis. Topics will include research design, measurement, participant safety, interdisciplinary collaboration, and translating findings into caregiver education that normalizes developmentally appropriate crying while promoting safe, evidence-based responses when caregivers become overwhelmed. Attendees will gain practical guidance for conducting rigorous, socially meaningful research that expands the application of behavior analysis to broader public health concerns.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify methodological and ethical considerations for conducting behavior-analytic research on infant crying and other complex, socially significant behaviors
2. Describe strategies for balancing internal validity, ecological validity, and participant safety when designing applied behavior-analytic research
3. Explain how interdisciplinary collaboration and caregiver education can support the translation of behavior-analytic research into meaningful public health and prevention efforts

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2026
CONFERENCE SESSIONS

8:00 AM – 8:45 AM **OPEN BUSINESS MEETING** **No CEUs Offered**

Everyone is welcome to join the Executive Committee in Hamilton I (the same location as the presentations) for discussion about ALABA's goals and activities.

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM **CEUs Offered: 1SUP**

The Silent Epidemic: Revealing the Safety Risks Clinicians Face and the Systems That Can Protect Them

ANDRESSA SLEIMAN, Ph.D., BCBA-D (Florida Institute of Technology; Performance Blueprints)

Clinicians supporting individuals with disabilities often face significant physical, environmental, and psychosocial risks, yet their safety rarely receives the same attention as client safety. This invited presentation highlights what can be described as a silent epidemic: a widespread, persistent problem that affects a large portion of clinicians but receives little systematic attention or measurable intervention. Drawing from ongoing research on clinician safety, this session will identify hidden exposure areas and share pilot data on the conditions shaping safety-related behavior in human-service settings. Using an organizational behavior management framework, the talk will demonstrate how behavior-analytic assessment tools such as the PDC-S can help identify environmental and performance barriers that contribute to unsafe conditions. The role of supervision, feedback, and competency-based training strategies will also be discussed as practical avenues for strengthening safety practices. Attendees will leave with evidence-based approaches to evaluate risks, support safe performance, and promote a culture of safety for those who provide essential care to others.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify common physical, environmental, and psychosocial risk factors that affect clinicians providing services to individuals with disabilities
2. Describe how supervisors can assess workplace conditions that interfere with safe and effective service delivery using behavior-analytic and OBM assessment strategies
3. Explain supervisory practices that support safe performance, including structured performance feedback and ongoing monitoring of staff behavior

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2026 (cont.)

10:10 AM – 11:10 AM **CEUs Offered: 1E**

On the Ethics of Assessing and Addressing (or not) Repetitive Behavior

BILL AHEARN, Ph.D., BCBA-D (New England Center for Children)

This presentation will describe the best practices for assessing and treating (or not) automatically-reinforced repetitive behavior (i.e., self-injury, stereotypy, higher-level repetitive behavior like arranging and ordering). Intensive behavior analytic intervention for children diagnosed with autism can produce large gains in social, cognitive, and language development. One critical area to address is repetitive behavior. Some applied research on evaluating and treating several forms of repetitive behavior will be reviewed with a focus on effective interventions and ethicality. Treatment strategies discussed will include Response Interruption and Redirection (RIRD) and competing activities identified via Augmented Competing Stimulus Assessments (ACSA). Additionally, a newer line of research on assessing and treating higher level repetitive behavior, specifically arranging and ordering stimuli, will be reviewed.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the functional presentation of repetitive behavior
2. Describe a variety of Response Interruption and Redirection (RIRD) procedures
3. Describe when RIRD procedures are NOT necessary and will be able to describe competing stimulus procedures for supporting contextually appropriate behavior

11:20 AM – 12:20 PM **CEUs Offered: 1E**

Ethical Considerations in Infant Crying Research and Intervention

JENNIFER BRUZEK, Ph.D., BCBA-D (University of Alabama Huntsville) and **Benjamin Witts, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA** (St. Cloud University)

Infant crying is among the most distressing and consequential stimuli caregivers encounter. Excessive crying is one of the most common concerns parents report to pediatricians. Although often experienced as frustrating or exhausting, infant crying is also associated with more serious outcomes, including infant abusive head trauma. Given its impact on both family well-being and infant safety, effective intervention is essential. A central challenge, however, is determining where and how to intervene. As a behavior, crying can be shaped by operant contingencies and is therefore modifiable. At the same time, as a stimulus, caregivers typically experience crying as aversive, creating additional complexities for research and intervention. Any comprehensive approach must also consider cultural norms, equitable access to services, and meaningful individual differences among families. Advancing effective interventions will require substantial research, but many relevant questions present significant ethical challenges. This talk explores those challenges and discusses directions for future research.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify at least one ethical concern with intervening on infant crying
2. Identify at least one ethical concern with intervening on caregiver responding
3. Identify at least one ethical concern with researching infant crying

LUNCH BREAK (on your own) 12:20 – 1:20PM

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2026 (cont.)

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM **CEUs Offered: 1**

We are Radical Behaviorists and why you should be too!

Panel Discussion: BILL AHEARN, Ph.D., BCBA-D (New England Center for Children) **chair and discussant along with SARAH RICHLING, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA,** (Auburn University), **JOHN MICHAEL FALLIGANT, Ph.D.,** (Auburn University)**, and PAIGE MCKERCHAR, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA** (Jacksonville State University)

The professional practice of applied behavior analysis (ABA) is growing exponentially. This practice consists of applying the principles of the science of behavior analysis to produce socially meaningful change in behavior. Practitioners are required to demonstrate competency with these basic principles. More recently, the BACB® has added Behaviorism and Philosophical Foundations to the required coursework for prospective BCBAs® but there is little guidance on the content of this coursework. This panel will discuss the philosophical perspective, Radical Behaviorism (RB), that is the foundation of behavior analysis. Bill Ahearn will serve as the moderator and a panelist, discuss RB, past and present, as well as the risks to ABA of deviating from the RB perspective. Paige McKerchar will provide her perspective on the importance of RB to practice and its philosophical assumptions. John Michael Falligant will also provide his perspective on the importance of RB to practice. Sarah Richling will discuss the importance of teaching RB, as well as recommending specific content, in ABA coursework. Time will be reserved for questions and comments from the audience.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Describe Radical Behaviorism and its underlying philosophical underpinnings
2. Describe how practice is best informed by the Radical Behaviorist perspective
3. Describe how to teach Radical Behaviorism to practitioners

2:40 PM – 3:40 PM **CEUs Offered: 1E**

Do You Believe in Magic? Navigating Pseudoscience With Compassion and Evidence-Based Practice

ANSLEY HODGES, Ph.D., BCBA-D (Nemours Children's Health)

Pseudoscientific approaches to autism treatment, such as facilitated communication, persist despite overwhelming scientific evidence debunking their effectiveness. This symposium examines why people, including loving and well-intentioned caregivers, believe in and defend these practices. Using a contingency analysis, we examine the reinforcing variables that maintain belief in pseudoscientific treatments, from hope and desperation to the persuasive influence of charismatic proponents. We also consider broader cultural factors, including anti-science sentiment and the appeal of magical thinking. With the rise in popularity of media like The Telepathy Tapes podcast, behavior analysts will likely encounter more questions about these controversial approaches. Dismissing these beliefs outright may alienate those we seek to support, while uncritical acceptance risks perpetuating harm. Instead, we argue for a third approach that blends empirical rigor with compassion. We must compete with pseudoscience, not just refute it, by making evidence-based approaches more accessible, engaging, and reinforcing for families. This talk will feature real-world examples, a review of relevant research, and practical guidance for practitioners. The second portion of the symposium will focus on strategies for engaging in constructive conversations about pseudoscience, emphasizing ethical and compassionate communication. Participants will leave with tools to navigate these discussions effectively, ensuring their advocacy for evidence-based practice is persuasive and respectful.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will:

1. Describe how to evaluate non-evidence based alternative treatments along with evidence-based treatments in clinical practice
2. State at least two reasons why pseudoscientific approaches persist despite scientific evidence debunking these treatments
3. Describe a compassionate framework to have difficult conversations with caregivers and other providers about alternative treatments and empirically validated treatments

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9TH, 2026 (cont.)

3:50 PM – 4:50 PM **CEUs Offered: 1**

ADMH, AIACC, RAN: Advancing Autism Supports

CHELSEA TAYLOR, Ph.D., LPC, NCC (Alabama Department of Mental Health)

This presentation will provide an overview of autism-related services and supports available through the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH), highlighting key initiatives designed to improve access, coordination, and outcomes for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and their families. Participants will learn about the role and activities of the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC), including its efforts to foster collaboration across state agencies and stakeholders. The session will also explore the Regional Autism Network (RAN), its statewide structure, services, and contributions to training, outreach, and community-based support. Attendees will gain a better understanding of Alabama's coordinated approach to autism services and opportunities for cross-system partnership and resource development.

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify all Intensive Home-Based Services provided by ADMH Autism services
2. Describe the goals of the Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council
3. Identify all services provided by the Regional Autism Network

NOTES

2026 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Past President: Laura Senn, Ph.D., LBA, BCBA-D (2024-2026)
President: Lauren Elliott, M.S., LBA, BCBA (2025-2027)
President Elect: Erich Grommet, Ph.D., LBA, BCBA-D, Licensed Psychologist (2026-2028)

Members-at-Large:
Cory Johnson, M.A., LBA, BCBA (Oct 2026-2027)
Renee Renda, Ph.D., BCBA (2025-2027)
Heather Jones, Ed.D., LBA, BCBA (2026-2028)
Mollie Todt, Ph.D., LBA, BCBA-D (2026-2028)

Student Representatives:
Cass Norton, B.S. (Jacksonville State University)
Gretchen Krause Varnon, B.A. (Auburn University)

Executive Director: Sarah Richling, Ph.D., LBA, BCBA-D
Business Manager: Annette Carter
Conference Manager: Mary-Kate Carey, Ph.D., LBA, BCBA-D

2026 Executive Committee Elections

The following Executive Committee positions will be filled for 2027:

- President-Elect (3-year term)
- Student-at-Large (1-year term)

Full members of ALABA are eligible to vote for all positions; student members may vote for the Student Representative. Newly elected Executive Committee members will take office beginning January 2027.

OUR SINCEREST APPRECIATION GOES OUT TO

Our Invited Speakers

Bill Ahearn
Jennifer Bruzek
Ansley Hodges
Heather Jones
Heather McGee
Maithri Sivaraman
Andressa Sleiman
Amelia Spencer
Chelsea Taylor
Benjamin Witts

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Schedule of Presentations and CEUs Available

Thursday, October 8, 2026

Time	Event	CE Hours (6)
9:00-10:00	**Erich Grommet** *Presidential Address* – Understanding Behavior, Expanding Responsibility	1
10:10-11:10	**Heather McGee** A Systems Approach to Strategic Planning	1
11:20-12:20	**Heather Johnes** Beyond the Island: The Evolving Role and Expanding Capacity of the School-Based Behavior Analyst	1
12:20-1:20	**Lunch Break**	NA
1:15-2:00	**Poster Session and Data Share**	NA
2:10-3:10	**Maithri Sivaraman** Moving From Instructional Trials to Functional and Meaningful Language with RFT	1
3:20-4:20	**Amelia Spencer** *(Mary-Kate Carey, ACE Instructor)* Cultivating Student Generated Questions in Young Children With Autism	1
4:30-5:30	**Jennifer Bruzek and Benjamin Witts:** Studying Infant Crying: Lessons for Conducting Behavior Analytic Research on Complex, Socially Significant Behaviors	1

Friday, October 9, 2026

Time	Event	CE Hours (6)
8:00-8:45	**Open ALABA Business Meeting**	NA
9:00-10:00	**Andressa Sleiman** The Silent Epidemic: Revealing the Safety Risks Clinicians Face and the Systems That can Protect Them	1 SUP
10:10-11:10	**Bill Ahearn** On the Ethics of Assessing and Addressing (or not) Repetitive Behavior	1 Ethics
11:20-12:20	**Jennifer Bruzek and Benjamin Witts** Ethical Considerations in Infant Crying Research and Intervention	1 Ethics
12:20-1:20	**Lunch Break**	NA
1:30-2:30	**Panel Discussion: Bill Ahearn, John Michael Falligant, Paige McKerchar, Sarah Richling** We are Radical Behaviorists and why you should be too!	1
2:40–3:40	**Ansley Hodges** Do you Believe in Magic? Navigating Pseudoscience with Compassion and Evidence-Based Practice	1 Ethics
3:50-4:50	**Chelsea Taylor** *(Mary-Kate Carey, ACE Instructor)* ADMH, AIACC, RAN: Advancing Autism Supports	1