Autism Behavioral Studies

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Bachelor of Science in Autism Behavioral Studies
To meet the growing need for qualified, highly trained providers of autism services and treatment, Saint Joseph's University offers a B.S. in Autism Behavioral Studies. This program offers a rigorous and comprehensive undergraduate major focusing primarily on medically related services and treatment of autism through extensive classroom education and training, as well as hands-on skill development and practice for mastery of classroom concepts. Students complete this major with the option of obtaining a Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst Certification (BCaBA).

The curriculum for the Autism Behavioral Studies Major is approved by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies in Washington, DC. Applied Behavior Analysis has been endorsed by many state and federal agencies, including state health departments and the U.S. Surgeon General. In order to receive BCaBA certification approval, the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) requires an approved Bachelors degree in a health-related field. With a Bachelor’s degree in Autism Behavioral Studies, completion of the required coursework and field hours, and successfully passing the BCaBA exam, students will obtain national certification as Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBA), graduating with a highly marketable credential to work in any area of the United States.

Need and demand
According to the Centers for Disease Control, the number of individuals with autism has risen dramatically. Autism is now considered an urgent public health crisis, needing resources, funding and, most importantly, highly trained health professionals and therapists. Research has demonstrated that early, intensive intervention treatment services may greatly improve child development. Further, there is a significant need for adult services for individuals 21 years and older. As the rates of autism continue to climb and the field becomes more specialized, there is an increased demand for highly trained students who specifically focus on autism, especially in the use of evidence-based practices such Applied Behavior Analysis.

Students majoring in Autism Behavioral Studies will benefit from a comprehensive program of study that includes a rigorous focus in Applied Behavior Analysis and behavioral techniques, biological issues in autism, navigating medical services, community-based advocacy, managing the population of individuals with autism, health policy in autism, coping with the stress of a child or family member with autism, coping methods for providers of autism services, long-term care, ancillary services and other related topics. This comprehensive approach is unique and is highly desirable for students interested in focusing specifically on autism services. The Autism Behavioral Studies program is housed in the Department of Health Services, aligning the program with the medical field and behavioral medicine. The Department of Health Services offers courses in allied and public health, epidemiology, and behavioral medicine. These students go on to work in the field of autism as behavior analysts, occupational and physical therapists, speech pathologists, behavioral medicine specialists, health and hospital administrators, health policy makers and advocates and therapists, as well as other areas of medicine and public health.

Student Learning Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Graduates of the Autism Behavioral Studies Program will know and understand the potential causes, symptoms and diagnostic criteria of autism spectrum disorders as well as the specific needs of individuals with autism across the lifespan and how they are treated.

Objective 1.1: Demonstrate knowledge of the current theories on the causes of autism spectrum disorders.

Objective 1.2: Demonstrate knowledge of the frequency, characteristics, symptoms, and diagnostic criteria of individuals with autism spectrum disorders.
**Objective 1.3:** Demonstrate knowledge of the nature of stereotypes, stigma, and discrimination of individuals with autism spectrum disorders.

**Goal 2:** Graduates of the Autism Behavioral Studies Program will know and understand the unique and specific behavioral needs of individuals with autism as well as both medical and behavioral approaches to autism treatment and related issues.

**Objective 2.1:** Identify the behavioral needs of children and adults with autism spectrum disorders and demonstrate the current behavioral approaches to treating behavioral issues of individuals with autism using Applied Behavior Analysis and medically related therapeutic services.

**Objective 2.2:** Demonstrate the ability to communicate orally and in writing in the language of the discipline and particularly on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis.

**Goal 3:** Graduates of the Autism Behavioral Studies Program will understand, follow and demonstrate the ethics guidelines and professional codes of conduct for working with individuals with autism.

**Objective 3.1:** Demonstrate the roles and responsibilities of behavior analysts, therapists, allied health professionals and related staff, and demonstrate understanding of ethics guidelines in working with individuals with autism.

**Objective 3.2:** Graduates will act as responsible citizens, embracing personal and career objectives that honor and serve individuals with autism and their families.

**Goal 4:** Graduates of the Autism Behavioral Studies Program will identify and understand the difficulties that families face in coping with autism and the impact of paying for autism-related services, as well as the social and economic impact on families and on society.

**Objective 4.1:** Identify the impact on parents, siblings, families, and friends of individuals with autism spectrum disorders and demonstrate how to best help these individuals cope with associated stress.

**Objective 4.2:** Identify the impact of political issues, including funding and approval of services, around autism spectrum disorders.

**Goal 5:** Graduates of the Autism Behavioral Studies Program will demonstrate how to collect behavioral data using Applied Behavior Analysis; to measure the progress of individuals with autism; to develop behavioral plans for individuals with autism; and/or to conduct research on individuals with autism or on related treatment plans.

**Objective 5.1:** Collect data on the progress of individuals with autism and develop behavioral plans; or collect data for the purpose of conducting research on a particular topic in the field of autism.

**Objective 5.2:** Identify and demonstrate methods to empirically assess and evaluate the progress of individuals with autism spectrum disorders for the purpose of developing intervention plans.

**Requirements for the Autism Behavioral Studies Major**

**GEP Signature Courses (See Curricula):** six courses

**GEP Variable Courses (See Curricula):** six to nine courses.

**Required courses for the ABS major include:**

**One Biology or Chemistry Course with Lab**

**GEP Overlays (See Curricula)**

**GEP Integrative Learning Component:** three courses

- PSY 110 Intro to Psychology
- MAT 118 Introduction to Statistics or Psychology Course

**GEP Electives:** 8-11 courses

**Major Concentration:** eleven courses including Autism Behavior Studies Core Requirements: 6 courses

- IHS 465 Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders
- IHS 466 Applied Behavior Analysis and Autism Treatment
- IHS 467 Social Skills Development in Autism
- IHS 331 Statistics and Research Methods

Advanced Courses (choose either Community-based Research and Advocacy sequence OR BCAba Certification:}
I. Community-based Research and Advocacy
IHS 465 Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders
465
IHS Applied Behavior Analysis and Autism
466 Treatment:
IHS Social Skills Development in Autism
467

II. BCaBA Certification
IHS 473 Advanced Principles of Applied Behavior
473 Analysis
IHS 474 Applications of ABA: Functional Analysis
474
IHS 472 Senior Seminar - Behavioral Consultation in
472 Autism Behavioral Studies

Area Studies: 4 courses (at least 2 courses must be
from Health Services)

Health Services Courses:
IHS 468 Resources & Advocacy in Autism
IHS 469 Adult and Transition Services
IHS 471 Special Topics in Autism
IHS 491 Internship in Autism Studies
IHS 110 Psychosocial Aspects of Chronic Illness
& Disability
IHS 248 Health and School Aged Child
Linguistics Courses:
LIN 150 Language, Linguistics, and the Real
World
LIN 320 Phonetics
IHS 110 Psychosocial Aspects of Chronic Illness
& Disability
IHS 248 Health and the School-aged Child
PSY 120 Lifespan Development
PSY 121 Child Development
PSY 122 Abnormal Psychology for Non-Majors
(or Psychology majors course)
PSY 201 Biological Basis of Behavior
PSY 226 Psychology of Emotion
PSY 237 Abnormal Child Psychology
EDU 155/156 Foundations in Early Childhood
Education
EDU 241/244 Social Motor Development
SPE 150/151 Introduction to Special Education
SPE 330/331 Teaching in Inclusive Environments
SPE 480 Family, School and Community in a
Diverse Society

Minor in Autism Studies
Core Courses - 3 required:
IHS 465 Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders
IHS 469 Adult and Transition Services
IHS 471 Special Topics in Autism
IHS 491 Internship in Autism Studies
IHS 110 Psychosocial Aspects of Chronic Illness
& Disability
IHS 248 Health and the School-aged Child
LIN 150 Language, Linguistics, and the Real
World
LIN 320 Phonetics
PSY 120 Lifespan Development
PSY 121 Child Development
PSY 122 Abnormal Psychology for Non-Majors
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EDU 241/244 Social Motor Development
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SPE 330/331 Teaching in Inclusive Environments
SPE 480 Family, School and Community in a
Diverse Society

Autism Behavioral Studies Courses
IHS 465 Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorders (3 credits)
Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD's), including
Autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, and
Asperger's Syndrome, are common, occurring in 1
in 166 individuals. The result of a neurological
disorder that affects the functioning of the brain,
ASD's impact social interactions and
communication skills. The types of ASD's range in
severity from very low functioning, associated with significant cognitive deficits and highly disruptive behaviors, to very high functioning, associated with highly gifted intelligence and "quirky" behaviors. This course introduces students to the neurology, symptoms, diagnostic criteria, causes, biomedical treatments, and behavioral interventions, as well as to the impact on individuals with ASD's, families, friends, school districts, the economy, and society with regard to functioning, coping, prognosis, and outcomes.

IHS 466 Applied Behavior Analysis and Autism Treatment (3 credits)
This course is designed to introduce the current research-based interventions in the field of autism that include applied behavior analysis (verbal behavior, discrete trial instruction, picture communication, Pivotal Response Training, Competent Learner Model), TEACCH, and social skills. Students will gain a general understanding of applied behavior analysis principles and how they can be used across multiple environments (home, school, early intervention, clinics) to address the various social, behavioral and communication deficits of individuals with autism. IHS 466 is recommended prior to or concurrently with this course.

IHS 467 Social Skills Development in Autism (3 credits)
Social skills are learned behaviors that individuals need to successfully navigate social interactions and relationships. This course introduces students to a variety of approaches for assessing and improving the social skills of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. A variety of empirically validated methodologies will be discussed, including incidental teaching; video modeling; social stories; and using textual cues. Students will learn to apply these methodologies to teach skills such as joint attention, greetings, conversations, social play, self-awareness, perspective-taking, critical thinking, developing friendships, and community and home success. IHS 467 is recommended prior to or concurrently with this course.

IHS 468 Resources and Advocacy for Autism (3 credits)
Intervention and therapeutic services are critical to improving the lives of children and adults, and advocating for individuals with autism is an important process in securing these services. This course introduces students to the role that therapists, physicians, families, case workers and community agents serve in advocating for those with autism, where services are provided, how they are funded, what they offer those with autism, and how to advocate for individuals with autism. IHS 468 is recommended prior to or concurrently with this course.

IHS 469 Adult and Transition Services in Autism (3 credits)
This course focuses on understanding the issues facing adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Students will learn about issues adults with ASD face including independent living skills, friendships, sexual relationships and marriage, finding and coping with employment, secondary education, post-secondary education, psychiatric disturbances in adulthood, legal issues, and enhancing independence. Students will learn the newest research and intervention techniques to promote a successful transition to adulthood. IHS 469 is recommended prior to or concurrently with this course.

IHS 470 – Senior Seminar-Research in Autism Behavioral Studies (3 credits)
In this course, important topics on Autism Spectrum Disorders will be discussed in more detail and students will design an individualized major research project. This project will help students to focus on the specific needs of children or adults with autism by developing particular types of goals, services, programs, or other relevant activities. This course will also involve designing a plan for working with individuals with autism to help improve the quality of their functioning in meaningful areas of their lives. A senior research thesis project will be required for this course. Only open to students completing the Research and Advocacy sequence. Prerequisites: IHS 465; IHS 466; IHS 467; IHS 468; IHS 469 and Senior Status.

IHS 471 Special Topics in Autism (3 credits)
Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), including Autism, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, and Aspergers Syndrome, are common. The result of a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain, ASD’s impact social interactions and communication skills. The types of ASD range in severity from very low functioning, associated with significant cognitive deficits and highly disruptive behaviors, to very high functioning, associated with highly gifted intelligence and "quirky" behaviors. This course is a continuation of Intro to Autism Spectrum Disorder and provides advanced topics in the causes, treatments and implications of autism. The format for this course is seminar style. This will primarily consist of significant student involvement.
IHS 472 Senior Seminar-Behavioral Consultation in Autism Behavioral Studies (3 credits)
In this course, important topics on Autism Spectrum Disorders will be discussed in more detail and students will design an individualized behavioral project. This project will help students to focus on the specific needs of children or adults with autism by developing particular types of goals, services, programs, or other relevant activities. This course will also involve designing a plan for working with individuals with autism to help improve the quality of their functioning in meaningful areas of their lives. In addition, this course will serve as the third practicum course for BCaBA certification. This course will also include the third practicum requirement for BCaBA certification. Only open to students completing the BCaBA sequence. Prerequisites: IHS 465, IHS 466, IHS 467, IHS 473, IHS 474 and Senior Status.

IHS 473 Advanced Principles of Applied Behavior Analysis
This course is designed to expand upon the previously learned concepts of behavior analysis and connect it to the practical world for teachers and educators. In this course, students will gain an understanding of how to use the principles and practices of applied behavioral management in the classroom. Classroom-based examples and practices firmly grounded in research will be discussed. This course will address identifying target behavior, collecting and graphing data, functional assessment, experimental design, arranging antecedents and consequences, generalizing behavior change, and the importance of ethical considerations in using applied behavior analysis in the classroom. Students will also have the opportunity to analyze classroom examples that show teachers using applied behavior analysis techniques in different settings. This course will also include the first practicum requirements for BCaBA certification. Prerequisites: IHS 465, IHS 466, and IHS 467.

IHS 474 Applications of ABA: Functional Analysis and Ethics
This course is designed to expand upon the previously learned concepts of behavior analysis and will present the student with information on observation, data collection, and data interpretation. Students will learn the methods for obtaining descriptive data and the procedures for conducting systematic manipulations. Functional assessments and analysis of individual behaviors will be a primary focus. Specific single subject experimental designs will be discussed. The ethical considerations inherent in behavioral assessment, treatment, and research will be reviewed. This course will also include the second practicum requirements for BCaBA certification. Prerequisites: IHS 465, IHS 466, IHS 467, and IHS 473.

IHS 490 Internship in Interdisciplinary Health Services(3-6 credits)
This course will provide students with direct, hands-on experience in the health care field in an instructional setting. Offered in the summer only. Permission of the Director is required.

IHS 491 Internship in Autism Studies (3 credits)
The course will provide students with direct, hands-on experience in working with children and/or adults with autism in a highly supervised, instructional setting. Offered in the summer only. Permission of the Director is required.

IHS 493-494 Independent Study in Interdisciplinary Health Services (3-6 credits)
Students who have completed four regular semesters with an overall grade point average of 3.0 (or cumulative average) of 3.4 or higher for courses in the major field) may, with the prior approval of the chairs and Dean’s office concerned, register each semester for one upper division course in the major field (or a closely related field) to be taken in the Independent Study/Directed Readings or Research/Tutorial format. Such courses are offered to enrich the student’s major program and not as a special arrangement to facilitate a student’s fulfillment of course or credit requirements. Additional conditions are described in Guidelines for Directed Readings, Independent Study, and Similar Courses issued by the appropriate Dean’s Office.