



Center for Autism and Related Disorders

Job Analysis Study

April 2015

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Executive Summary

In April 2013, the Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) determined that the profession of treating autism spectrum disorder (ASD) using the principles and procedures of applied behavior analysis (ABA) was lacking a certification program that focused exclusively on this disorder.

ASD poses unique clinical challenges, and it is increasing in prevalence. In responding to these issues, CARD's training program focuses on evidence-based ABA principles and procedures in the context of ASD-specific training. CARD's training of personnel in ABA is particularly comprehensive, and CARD believes that this concentration of training is optimal for successful treatment outcomes. CARD attributes its high success rate in treating ASD with ABA to its intense training and practice methodology. While various alternative combinations of education, training, and experience may provide adequate preparation for treating ASD using ABA principles and procedures, CARD holds its treatment model as the professional standard for determining the equivalence of alternate pathways.

The combination of rising prevalence of ASD and the need for highly trained personnel led CARD to determine that a certification program based exclusively on its ABA treatment methodology was desirable. CARD further concluded that it would develop its certification program to conform to the high accreditation standards of the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and that it would apply for accreditation upon meeting NCCA's eligibility requirements. To facilitate achievement of this goal, CARD contracted with SeaCrest Company, a consulting firm that specializes in accreditation.

Two major initiatives were launched. First, organizational structure, policies, and procedures were needed that complied with accreditation standards. Janice Moore, CEO of SeaCrest, led this initiative. Second, the exam and all of its associated components needed to comply with accreditation standards. Conducting a job analysis is the first of these components. SeaCrest retained Leon Gross, Ph.D., a psychometrician who has worked with SeaCrest on several accreditation projects, to lead the job analysis study. SeaCrest also participated in leading the study, along with Julie Kornack, who serves as CARD's Senior Public Policy Analyst.

CARD created a Job Analysis Steering Committee to work closely with Dr. Gross in developing the job analysis survey. The Steering Committee consisted of six subject matter experts (SMEs) who were selected based on their professional experience with the CARD model, as well as their demographic diversity. The Steering Committee held a 2-day meeting in metropolitan Los Angeles during November 2014. The primary purpose of the meeting was to develop the job analysis to correspond to the job content elements that are related to effective entry-level performance derived from evidence-based ABA treatment of ASD. Established reference materials from the profession were used to identify 108 content elements grouped into six content domains.

The job analysis was conducted in the form of an electronic survey. Two rating scales, importance and frequency, were developed to evaluate the content items. The ultimate goal was to rank content items from most relevant to least relevant with regard to on-the-job performance.

Both rating scales had four reference points. Three quality-related open-ended comment questions were included, as well as eight demographic items, to evaluate the representativeness of the respondent sample.

The pilot survey was disseminated and analyzed during January, 2015. Only minor changes were deemed necessary based on the responses and open-ended comments recorded by the pilot.

The final survey was disseminated in mid-February, 2015 to the entire CARD database of 1,066 clinical employees who had experience in treating individuals with ASD. The number of respondents was 440, a 41% response rate. The sample was considered adequate in size and representativeness.

Means and standard deviations were computed for each of the content items. The importance means were consistently higher than the frequency means, but they were in close correspondence. Content items with high importance means had high frequency means. Similarly, content items with low importance means had low frequency means. Combining the importance and frequency means for each of the six content domains resulted in significantly different outcome weights.

The job analysis is considered to be a significant developmental milestone for the certification program and the profession. The report will become an important reference document as the program and the profession move forward and evolve.