

VOL. 1 ISSUE 1 • NOV 2023

# MOSAIC MINDS

Official Newsletter of Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers



## A MIDWEST MINUTE

At Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers our passion is personal. Many of our team members, from our direct care staff to our leadership team, have first-hand experience with Autism and ABA therapy. We are experts in ABA therapy, but you are the expert when it comes to your child. Our team works with your family to decide which behaviors and skills to work through to help your child be as successful as possible. You collaborate with us every step of the way.

Simply put, our purpose is to help children on the Autism spectrum live the most successful and fulfilled lives possible. All while educating the community and raising awareness for neuropositivity and diversity.



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# The Evolution of ABA

## UTILIZING NEUROPOSITIVITY & POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT



Since its development in the 1970s, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy has grown by leaps and bounds in ethics, training, and techniques. Previously promoted as a therapy option to help children on the Autism Spectrum become “indistinguishable” from their peers, modern-day clinicians (called Behavior Analysts or BCBA’s) have moved to a therapy approach that celebrates the unique strengths of each child. This approach to therapy, called “Neuropositivity”, highlights the need for diversity and the development of positive self-esteem.

With this shift has come the transition into positive reinforcement, rewards, and encouragement to reach developmental goals, as well as a more comprehensive approach to care. Modern BCBA’s collaborate with a child’s extended care team, including their school, families or caregivers, speech therapists, feeding therapists, occupational therapists, and more. This technique can improve communication and teach adaptive life skills to help children be successful in many different settings.

Today, ABA is considered the “gold-standard” therapy option for children on the Autism Spectrum. Part of the reason for its success and evolution, is the high standards of care set by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) which governs and certifies all clinicians (Behavior Analysts and Behavior Technicians) providing ABA therapy. Every BCBA (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) and RBT (Registered Behavior Technician) is thoroughly trained and held to a strict moral code ensuring quality and ethical treatment practices that encompass dignity, compassion respect, and integrity for individuals and families of every kind.

ABA therapy has continued to evolve in ethical principles, to utilize the least intrusive methods that encourage individual independence and provide a comprehensive treatment approach. Governed by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), all BCBA’s and RBT’s are thoroughly trained with a moral code to ensure quality and ethical treatment practices.

- ABA Therapy is endorsed by
- The National Institute of Mental Health
  - The American Academy of Pediatrics
  - The American Psychological Association (APA)



# TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



**KAITLYN BROWN**  
**ALTOONA CAMPUS**  
REGISTERED BEHAVIOR  
TECHNICIAN (RBT)

Kaitlyn enjoys spending time with her family and the kiddos at her center.

Favorite Color: Pink

Favorite Snack: Jalapeño Chips

Favorite Candy: Skittles

Favorite Holiday: Christmas



**REYNA MELENDEZ, LBA**  
**ANKENY CAMPUS**  
BOARD CERTIFIED BEHAVIOR  
ANALYST (BCBA)

Favorite Colors: Black, Gray,  
Pale Pink

Favorite Snack: Trail Mix or  
Popcorn

Favorite Holiday: Thanksgiving

Reyna spends her free time with her husband and their two dogs going on adventures!

Fun Fact: Reyna has fostered 20+ dogs and puppies with Hope Animal Rescue.

Reyna is a board member of Fi and Friends, a local nonprofit in Des Moines, that provides a space where families feel welcomed and supported for their children on the spectrum.



**ALEX ANDERSON**  
**EDINA CAMPUS**  
BEHAVIOR TECHNICIAN

Alex's favorite part of his job is getting to know the kiddos and seeing their growth.

Favorite Vacation Spot:  
Colorado

Favorite Holiday: Halloween

Favorite Candy: Skittles

Favorite Sports Team:  
Timberwolves

Hobbies: Hiking, biking,  
playing board games,  
enjoying music & practicing  
yoga

# TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



SHAWNA JOHNSON, LBA  
WAUKEE CAMPUS  
BOARD CERTIFIED BEHAVIOR  
ANALYST (BCBA)

Shawna is passionate about being creative with the kiddos and fun ideas for the center.

Favorite Color: Maroon & Shades of Green

Favorite Snack: Cheetos & Red Delicious Apples

Favorite Candy: Skittles Shriekers

Favorite Holiday: Christmas



HOLLAND BROCKMANN  
WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS  
REGISTERED BEHAVIOR  
TECHNICIAN (RBT)

Holland thrives in fast-paced environments with detail-oriented projects.

Favorite Color: Black

Favorite Drink: Coffee- always

Favorite Holiday: Christmas

Favorite Candy: KitKats & Starbursts



AMANDA YOUNG  
WOODBURY CAMPUS  
BEHAVIOR TECHNICIAN

Amanda's favorite part about her job is making the children laugh.

Favorite Holiday: Christmas

Favorite Food: Pickles

Favorite Candy: Twix

Favorite Color: Purple

Hobbies: Poetry, reading, family time, being a momma



## EARLY INTERVENTION THERAPY

### WHAT IS IT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?



At its most basic, early intervention services are therapy services that occur before children reach school age and target learning during the most important developmental period of a child's life (birth to age three). Early intervention can take many forms and may include everything from ABA therapy, which helps to address behavioral challenges and build communication/ pre-academic skills, to occupational therapy, which can help with skills like walking, writing, or hand-eye coordination (like throwing or catching a ball).

Many children with developmental delays and/or behavior concerns are not identified early enough. This can lead to significant delays and missed opportunities. Early intervention is crucial to making a difference in the development of children of the Autism Spectrum.

Early intervention programs target basic skills that children typically learn within the first two years of life, like physical skills, communication skills, social skills, and emotional skills. It can also include services like family training, which helps caregivers understand their behaviors, and how to teach skills outside of the therapy center.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) says that children under the age of three years old who may be at risk of having developmental delays, may be eligible for services provided through early intervention systems in the child's area. Additionally, treatment for specific symptoms often does not need to wait for a formal ASD diagnosis. For example, a child with language delays could start receiving speech therapy before their formal diagnosis, with early intervention services. This is often dependent on a family's insurance coverage. Families should review their benefits prior to starting services.

Early intervention services can help children from birth to three years old learn important skills and greatly improve a child's development and result in better success rates for the individual throughout their life.

#### Early Intervention Programs Can Include:

- Family Training
- Speech Therapy
- Hearing Impairment Services
- Nutritional Services
- Physical Therapy and/ or Skills
- Communication Skills
- Social Skills
- Emotional Skills





Above: our Ankeny campus participated in Uptown Ankeny's Trunk-or-Treat event where they connected with over 1000 friends for a FIN-tastic evening of Halloween fun!  
Middle: the Ankeny team enjoyed spirited fun with theme days and fun in the gym.  
Bottom: Waukee's Halloween party was a blast, promoting skills, sensory-friendly fun, and beyond!





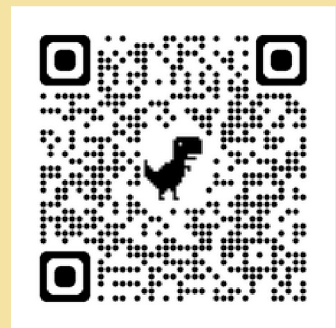
New to our Ankeny location, Dan Murphy, BCBA, was born in Boston and raised in Denver. Dan discovered his passion for Special Education while volunteering at a summer camp during his Undergrad. Dan loves spending his free time listening to music, traveling, cooking, and working out. He has been in ABA for almost ten years and has been a BCBA for over six. Dan is passionate about using the principles of ABA, especially ACT and OBM, in all aspects of work and life to help make the world a better place.



**DAN MURPHY**  
BOARD CERTIFIED BEHAVIOR ANALYST

DAN IS BUILDING HIS CASELOAD AND ACCEPTING NEW CLIENTS FOR OUR ANKENY LOCATION!

SCAN THE QR CODE FOR ENROLLMENT INFORMATION.



Pictured below: Amanda Stahley represented Midwest at the Autism Society of Iowa's Fall Conference on October 27th, and made a lot great connections. Thank you to everyone who stopped by the table and attended the conference!



Thank you to our friend Amanda Meyer with Music Class For Tots for donating treats to our Waukee Halloween event!



# The Buzz Around Town

Everyone we have spoken and worked with has been extremely friendly and responsive. Whenever I had a question along the way I always got a prompt responses through email and phone. For our evaluation, my daughter saw Hannah and she made quite the impression, in a great way! Hannah seems to have a passion for what she does and her energy is contagious. My daughter had asked to come back just so she can “play with Hannah again.”

-Altoona Campus

My son has been with Midwest for 6+ months and it has been life-changing for our family. They’ve helped teach him communication skills which has ultimately led to less meltdowns, and an overall happier child. They’ve helped with potty training and meet with us biweekly to teach us how to better support him. They even allow his big sister to attend training to help teach her how to interact with him. I’m so grateful for our Midwest Family!

-West Des Moines Campus

## Get Connected

### ALTOONA CAMPUS:

950 28TH AVE SW, STE 2 ALTOONA, IA 50009 | 515-446-2075

### ANKENY CAMPUS:

2405 N ANKENY RD ANKENY, IA 50023 | 515-446-2080

### EDINA CAMPUS:

7550 FRANCE AVE S, STE 200 EDINA, MN 55435 | 952-955-4057

### WAUKEE CAMPUS:

287 SE WESTOWN PKWY WAUKEE, IA 50263 | 515-446-3420

### WEST DES MOINES CAMPUS:

1280 OFFICE PLAZA DR WEST DES MOINES, IA 50266 | 515-446-3420

### WOODBURY CAMPUS:

748 BIELENBERG DR WOODBURY, MN 55125 | 651-796-2306

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