

fABA | Observer

Florida Association for Behavior Analysis

The official newsletter of The Florida Association for Behavior Analysis

A New Look for the Digital Age

Welcome to the new FABA Observer! FABA is transitioning to a digital version of the Observer.

History of the Observer

The Observer is a newsletter designed to disseminate information to FABA members throughout the year. It was created by Dr. Jon Bailey and Dr. Mary Burch in 2005. Since its inception, the Observer has chronicled the activities of FABA throughout the years through informative articles covering various topics such as legislative updates, ethical discussions, local chapter affairs, and more.

Looking Ahead

In addition to its new look and format, Observer articles will be curated by the FABA Social Media Committee. The Observer will be distributed digitally, through email to members and on social media, on a quarterly basis. If you have ideas of what types of articles you would like to see or other ways to improve the Observer, please email committee chairs mcastanos@fabaworld.org or llloveras@fabaworld.org.

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Reflections of a FABA President: Strengthening Our Community, Embracing Change, and Looking Forward



**Matt Potak, BCBA
FABA President**

It has been such a humbling experience being your FABA president this year. In working closely with the Board of Directors and Chairs of the committees, one of our goals this year is to make FABA strong and valuable to our membership. From my first FABA experience in 2003 to the first time I was elected president of the BAABA local chapter in 2005, there have been some significant changes with FABA over the years. My first conference I attended was in 2003 at the Tradewinds on St. Petersburg Beach just after completing my course sequence with Dr. Jose Martinez-Diaz. I remember the days of Jose taking our cohort out and driving us all over St Pete and looking for the best restaurants to eat at after an amazing day of learning. Jose was so inspirational to so many. He was one of the first learning experiences many of us had in the field of ABA. One of greatest things I learned from Jose was his ability to connect with people and his love and dedication to the field of ABA. When Jose was president of FABA in 2003, he had a presence of strength, acceptance,

and a strong passion for FABA that I also had shared as a new BCaBA. Some of the memories of his presidential speech and the way he connected with FABA members had such an impact on me personally and professionally. Since that time, that burning energy of passion and love for ABA and FABA stayed with me throughout my years when volunteering with FABA. I felt proud being a FABA member. As many of us remember our first conference, we left feeling connected to some of the best professions in our field. Along with those connections, there was the sense of FABA being supportive and welcoming as family. As a new BCaBA, FABA aligned with my professional and ethical values and provided the motivation that I needed to start my career. Over time, so many of us have volunteered and supported FABA by establishing new local chapters, attending our annual conference, and found ways to stay connected with FABA throughout the year. Many of our members have helped at the annual conference, volunteered for different committees within FABA and solidified the overwhelming focus of our Public Policy committee. I was amazed at how FABA represented the membership when I first became involved, but also how we have grown as an organization over the many years. Along with our membership numbers that have changed significantly, our conference has also changed. We have outgrown many of the hotels and conference centers we used in the past to host our annual conference. Our partnership with BehaviorLive has taken FABA to the next level of professional conferences. Along with changes in our conference and membership, we have grown with the number of local chapters across the state. We currently have 13 local chapters that represent different areas all over Florida. Our CoFABA conference is in its 8th year and continues to build in popularity among our membership. As a Board we have strengthened our Public Policy Committee by hiring a public policy director and establishing several subcommittees that focus on many of the key issues from our membership. This includes AHCA, APD, Education, and Juvenile Justice. Within our Public Policy Committee, we have been working diligently in building partnerships and establishing communication with key individuals that can help support the voices of our members. We have also grown our Board to include an early career member at large, and we have active committees that include, Membership, DEIA, Program, and many others.

The question comes back to, how can we continue to make FABA strong and valuable to our membership? How can we create value for you as a FABA member?

What passion do you bring to FABA in your professional career? What would you like FABA to do for you!? Let's continue this conversation with these questions to you as a FABA member. The FABA membership is one of our most valuable assets as an organization. You are the voices of FABA, and the Board Members want to continue to hear from you. This brings back the question of what we can do to strengthen FABA? How can FABA continue to align with your professional and ethical values?

What keeps you connected to FABA? For me it's a sense of connection and growth as a professional. This is a connection with others that share the same passion and encouragement to continue to support each other. It's where you can establish new and continued professional friendships. It's where your voice can be heard among others that may share similar issues or values with you. Please stay connected and visit our Facebook and contact us page at fabaworld.org. We want to continue to hear from you as we navigate into the new year!

We look forward to seeing you at CoFABA in Orlando on May10th and at our annual FABA conference at the JW Marriot Miami Turnberry Resort September 18th-21st 2024.



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Legislative and Public Policy Update

by Eric Prutsman, Esq., FABA General Counsel & Lobbyist

The 2024 Legislative Session is finished! It ended on March 8, 2024, and the Governor has already been active in signing bills. In all, 1,957 bills were filed, 2,196 amendments were considered, and 3,051 votes were cast. A total of 325 bills successfully passed both chambers of the Legislature. (This is approx. 10% of the total bills filed.) FABA engaged on a number of bills, including the bills summarized below that are now either on the Governor's desk or pending a trip to the Governor's Office for his action:

SB 7016 – Health Care (Live Healthy) – This bill establishes various healthcare-related programs and initiatives in Florida, expands telehealth services for minority maternity care statewide and introduces the Training, Education, and Clinicals in Health (TEACH) Funding Program. Additionally, the bill creates the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, allowing healthcare professionals licensed in other states to practice in Florida. Of particular importance, the bill included an appropriation for the reimbursement of behavior analysis at an amount of \$12.9 million. FABA initiated an email campaign to encourage the Governor to sign the bill, resulting in more than 100 emails. The bill was signed on March 21, 2024.

HB 5001 – General Appropriation Act (“The Budget”) – The Budget specifically includes proviso language within the APD portion of the budget to instruct APD on the implementation of iConnect to continue implementation and enhancement of the iConnect system for the purpose of providing electronic visit verification of service delivery to recipients by providers, and electronic service authorizations for Developmental Disabilities Medicaid Waiver services. One million dollars is to be used to contract with an independent software quality assurance and testing provider to engage with stakeholders and provide an assessment of the iConnect project by March 1, 2025. The contract shall require that all deliverables be simultaneously provided to the agency, the Executive Office of the Governor's Office of Policy and Budget, the chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, and the chair of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee.

Of particular importance, **APD is required to continue to provide enhanced iConnect technical assistance and host feedback and listening sessions with service providers to plan for future system enhancements. APD shall not begin compliance monitoring or recoupment of funds during the fiscal year that starts July 1, 2024, and ends June 30, 2025. Additionally, due to proviso in the Budget, APD has delayed any iConnect implementations that were scheduled before July 1, 2024, the effective date for the FY 2024-2025 Budget and accompanying proviso.** The Governor will sign the Budget by June 30, 2024.



HB 1403 – School Choice by Representative Tomkow – The bill expands and modifies requirements and provisions for various school choice scholarship programs in Florida, including the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program, the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, and the Hope Scholarship Program. The bill specifies eligibility for the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program, that can be used for behavior analysis services, by adding provisions for students with disabilities and prekindergarten programs. The bill requires development and annual revision of purchasing guidelines for the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program by the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities. The bill has not yet been advanced to the Governor's desk.

Legislative & Policy Update Continued...

SB 330 – Behavioral Health Teaching Hospitals by Senator Boyd - Establishes a framework for designating behavioral health teaching hospitals in Florida, setting criteria for such designation, and providing funding and reporting mechanisms. The bill authorizes hospitals to apply for a behavioral health teaching hospital designation, outlining specific criteria they must meet. The bill requires designated hospitals to affiliate with a state university, develop integrated workforce development programs, and collaborate on behavioral health care. The bill also defines “behavioral health professions” to include licensed or certified professionals serving the needs of patients with behavioral health disorders. (The certified designation applies to BCBAs and BCaBAs.) The Florida Center for Behavioral Health Workforce within the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute at USF is created to support the behavioral health workforce. And the bill appropriates funds for the operation of the Florida Center for Behavioral Health Workforce, resident positions in designated hospitals, and the implementation of related programs. This bill has already been signed by the Governor on March 21, 2024.

SB 1758 – Individuals with Disabilities by Senator Brodeur -

Revises provisions relating to programs and services for individuals with disabilities, enhancing care navigation services and ensuring electronic application options. The bill requires the agency to offer care navigation services to clients and caregivers at application and renewal reviews, aiming to connect clients with resources and supports. The bill also mandates the creation and integration of individualized care plans with public school students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to promote educational and habilitation goals. The agency is directed to develop and implement an online application process, maintain printable applications, and provide immediate acknowledgment of receipt for all applications. Provides \$38 million for expanding waiver services to more individuals, including those with caregivers aged 60 or older. Lastly, the bill instructs APD to create a comprehensive plan for a new Medicaid waiver program aimed at preventing future crisis enrollments, requiring a detailed report with purpose, eligibility criteria, fiscal impacts, and stakeholder involvement. The Governor signed this bill on March 21, 2024.



HB 341 – Designation of a Diagnosis on Motor Vehicle Registrations by Representative Salzman - Establishes the "Safeguarding American Families Everywhere (SAFE) Act" to update motor vehicle registration processes for individuals with specified disabilities or their guardians. The bill requires motor vehicle registration applications to include a voluntary option for individuals to indicate if they or their minor wards have been diagnosed with specified disabilities. The bill also lists disabilities and disorders eligible for designation, including Autism, ADHD, Down syndrome, Alzheimer's, PTSD, Diabetes, Autoimmune disorders, Deafness, Blindness, and more. Mandates the inclusion of a "SAFE" designation in a registrant's motor vehicle record without disclosing personal identifying information or specific diagnoses. Lastly, the bill ensures the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles allows vehicle owners to update their registrations to include or remove the "SAFE" designation at any time. The bill has not yet been advanced to the Governor's desk.

SB 832 – Employment of Individuals with Disabilities by Senator Calatayud - Requires agencies involved in the Employment First Act to enhance collaborative efforts by collecting and sharing data. The bill ensures that the interagency cooperative agreement identifies the roles, responsibilities, and objectives of state agencies and organizations, including data collection and sharing to support individuals with disabilities. The bill also mandates the identification of accountability measures for the sustainability of the agreement, specifically focusing on increasing competitive integrated employment, decreasing subminimum wage employment, and reducing nonintegrated employment settings for individuals with disabilities. The Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help is directed to issue an annual statewide report by December 1 each year, detailing the act's implementation progress and the effectiveness of accountability measures.

Thank you to our members that joined in on the advocacy on a number of these bills, and especially on the rate increase in SB 7016! We look forward to providing you with additional updates as executive branch agencies transition from legislative activity to administrative rulemaking and policy development.

Meet the New Faces of FABA's Board of Directors:

Introducing Colleen Taylor, Dr. Jonathan Fernand, and Dr. Vivian Ibañez

By Melissa “Missy” Olive, Executive Director

FABA is so fortunate to have 3 new Board Members this year. Last year, the Board of Directors voted to add a new Member at Large Position to be specifically reserved for an early career professional. The Board of Directors defined that as someone in their first 3 years of their position. Colleen Taylor was nominated for and ultimately voted in as that Member at Large. Colleen F. Taylor became a BCBA in May of 2020. However, she has been working in the field of ABA since 2011. During that time she served mostly children and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Colleen has a passion for teaching social skills, collaborating across disciplines and professions, and empowering parents and caregivers to utilize Behavior Analysis with their loved ones. In her free time, Colleen enjoys spending time with her two daughters and husband in Tallahassee, attempting to garden, and exploring state parks. Colleen is looking forward to supporting our organization in her new role and currently sits on the Public Policy Committee where she recently received a tour of the capitol with FABA's General Counsel, Eric Prutsman and long-time Public Policy Committee Co-Chair, Dr. Mary Riordan.

Our second Member at Large is Dr. Jonathan K. Fernand. Jonathan received his master's degree from the California State University, Sacramento in 2012 and his

Ph.D. from the University of Florida in 2017. Jonathan is an Assistant Professor in the School of Behavior Analysis at the Florida Institute of Technology. He has served as a reviewer for several journals including the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, Behavior Analysis in Practice, Behavior & Philosophy, and The Analysis of Verbal Behavior.



**Dr. Vivian Ibañez, BCBA-D
Member at Large**



**Colleen BCBA
Member at Large**



**Dr. Jonathan Fernand
Member at Large**

Jonathan has presented at regional, national, and international conferences and has authored several articles and book chapters pertaining to a range of topics including the assessment and treatment of pediatric feeding problems, treatment of restricted and repetitive behavior, caregiver and staff coaching, applied animal learning and welfare, as well as issues pertaining to competency, ethics, and equity of marginalized populations. Jonathan enjoys giving back to the behavior analytic community including his roles as a Member-at-Large for the Florida Association for Behavior Analysis (FABA) and a Subject Matter Expert for the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). He also serves on several clinical advisory boards and consults within clinical and educational service facilities. Outside of behavior analysis, Jonathan enjoys spending time with his husband, Chris, and their two Italian greyhounds, Watson and Lady Grey. Those who know Jonathan know he is passionate about mentorship, often dedicating much of his free time to personal and professional development for those around him. He thoroughly loves to unwind by taking care of his and his husband's 100+ houseplants, traveling, visiting theme parks, and drinking a nice hot cup of tea.

Last, but certainly not least, is Dr. Vivian Ibañez. Vivian was born in Guatemala City, Guatemala, and grew up in Baltimore, Maryland. A summer internship at the Kennedy Krieger Institute (KKI) provided Vivian's first exposure to behavior analysis and severe behavior disorders. Soon after, she joined KKI's Pediatric Feeding Disorders Program and was immediately drawn to this specialty. To expand her skills in this area, she was fortunate to learn from Dr. Cathleen Piazza while working in various divisions of the Munroe-Meyer Institute's Pediatric Feeding Disorders Program. She then received postdoctoral training at the University of Florida, where she is now a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology and Director of the Pediatric Feeding Disorders Program at the Florida Autism Center's Specialty Clinic in collaboration with the UF Health Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment. One of Vivian's favorite postdoctoral experiences was traveling throughout the state of Florida with Drs. Vollmer and Peters to consult and provide peer review at various centers providing behavior-analytic therapy. This experience made her aware of the needs related to service delivery and training for practitioners in community-based settings. Since then, Vivian has worked on expanding training resources and carrying out studies that expand the toolkit of interventions alongside a remarkable team of students and colleagues. Outside of work, Vivian's greatest joy has been her new role as “Mami” to her son Rafael, and she is eagerly anticipating the moment she can start feeding him all kinds of foods, especially those of Guatemalan cuisine!

Please join me in welcoming these new BOD members and if you see them at CoFABA Conference or FABA Conference, be sure to say hello to them!

Unexpected Pathways: My Journey into the DEIA Committee

By: Madison Duke, BCBA

I think I joined the DEIA Committee by accident. I was interested in the structure and process of ABAI-affiliated organizations, so I joined my local chapter as a master's student. When Tiki Fiol found out that I was interested in DEIA efforts, she invited me to the next DEIA committee meeting. I was so excited to get to learn more about how FABA prioritizes these important efforts, but I never thought I'd actually become a valued member of the committee.

My first DEIA Committee meeting, there was space for me to give input. Not only was I in the room, but I was also part of the conversation. I felt awkward the first time I shared an idea, but the discomfort was short-lived. The committee was appreciative and supportive, and I haven't hesitated to give input since then. DEIA is one of my passions, and joining this committee has given me the change to participate in conversations that make a difference.

Being part of a committee has also given me the opportunity to learn about dealing with barriers. When I suggested an idea that would require a change to the FABA bylaws, we talked through how we could immediately accomplish a similar goal without completely throwing out the original idea (spoiler: this is how the Early Career Board Member position came to be).

Whether your passion is DEIA, public policy, local chapters, or media, I would highly recommend joining a FABA committee. This has been a unique experience that allows me to collaborate with people I would be unlikely to meet otherwise. Joining the DEIA committee may have started an accident, but it is now a valuable way for me to spend time working towards one of my passions.



ABA Advances: Cutting-Edge Research Highlights

Angie Van Arsdale, a BCBA and doctoral student in Dr. Timothy Vollmer's Lab working under the clinical supervision of Dr. Vivian Ibañez, recently presented a research project at FABA! Her project, which is her doctoral dissertation, is titled "Evaluation of noncontingent reinforcement (NCR) in the treatment of pediatric feeding disorders".

Study 1 consisted of an evaluation of whether the addition of NCR mitigates challenging behavior and emotional responding that might occur during the implementation of empirically supported behavioral feeding interventions. For example, if continuous attention or a preferred item is present during feeding treatment, does this impact challenging behavior? Study 2 evaluated whether or not increases in challenging behavior were observed when NCR was removed.

So far, adding NCR improved challenging behavior for a few participants, but only one out of seven participants had increases in challenging behavior when NCR was removed. Takeaways: It appears NCR should always be included in treatment because it doesn't negatively impact behavior if it must be removed for some reason (e.g., change in environment).

Future directions will be to identify particular participant characteristics that influence outcomes. Angie's advice for those in clinical settings conducting research? A good study is one where no matter the outcomes, the findings are interesting and have clinical benefit. CHECK OUT HER CONCISE REVIEW ON THE TOPIC RECENTLY PUBLISHED IN JABA!

COFABA CONNECTIONS

Highlights from the FABA Local Chapters Across the State

SOFABA United:

Breaking the Language Barriers

The South Florida Chapter of the Florida Association for Behavior Analysis (SOFABA) has been busy in the local ABA community over the past year, but perhaps our most significant achievement has been the creation of the SOFABA United Conference. As part of our mission to unite local ABA communities and connect them with the broader state community, we took the initiative to host a groundbreaking conference that emphasized inclusivity and collaboration.

South Florida is home to a diverse cultural landscape, particularly in Miami, where there is a very large and steadily growing Spanish-speaking ABA community. However, our members reported a disconnect between the Spanish-speaking ABA community and the English-speaking one. Since most SOFABA events were in English, the Spanish-speaking community was not able to access valuable ABA resources. The opportunity to bridge

cultural and linguistic gaps within the profession and bring the local ABA community together led to the organization of a full-day Spanish conference held at the University of Miami this past November, in collaboration with UM CARD.

The response was overwhelming; we sold out our venue, with over 200 attendees in person and over 100 participating online. As a local chapter, we met so many BCBAs, BCaBAs, RBTs, and even agency owners in our community that we otherwise would have never reached! It really felt like a pivotal moment for SOFABA in achieving the mission of uniting our local community. The success of the event can also be attributed to the dedication of five exceptional presenters who generously shared their expertise with our Spanish-speaking ABA community:

Supervisión en las Escuelas - Presented by Liliana Dietsch-Vazquez, M.Ed., OTR/L, BCBA, and Malena Martinez, M.S., BCBA.

Usando las 7 dimensiones de ABA para cumplir con la necesidad médica - Presented by Dr. Paloma Rodriguez, BCBA-D.

Navegando la Póliza de Medicaid ABA - Presented by Michelle Castanos, M.Ed., BCBA.

Licenciatura de BCBAs en la Florida - Presented by Dr. Yanerys Leon, BCBA-D.

Introducción al Currículo de Essential for Living - Presented by Miguel Avila, M.A., BCBA.



The positive reception and enthusiasm from participants reaffirmed the need for such initiatives within the ABA community. Building on the success of SOFABA United, we have committed to making this an annual event, with plans to host it again later this year! Furthermore, SOFABA has taken significant steps towards fostering inclusivity and representation within the broader ABA community. Collaborating with our state/parent organization, FABA, SOFABA has secured a full Spanish track at the upcoming FABA conference in September 2024, featuring several amazing Spanish speakers, and the first ever invited Keynote Speaker in Spanish, Dr. Varsovia Hernández Eslava, from Mexico. This marks a pivotal moment for SOFABA and FABA as a whole and reflects our dedication to uniting and empowering Spanish-speaking ABA professionals across the state.

As we look towards the future, SOFABA remains steadfast in our commitment to fostering collaboration, promoting diversity, and advancing the field of applied behavior analysis. Through initiatives like SOFABA United, we are not only breaking down barriers but also paving the way for a more inclusive and vibrant ABA community in Florida.

You can follow SOFABA on social media for more information about our upcoming events and conferences!

SouthFaba@gmail.com Insta: @southfaba Facebook: @southfaba

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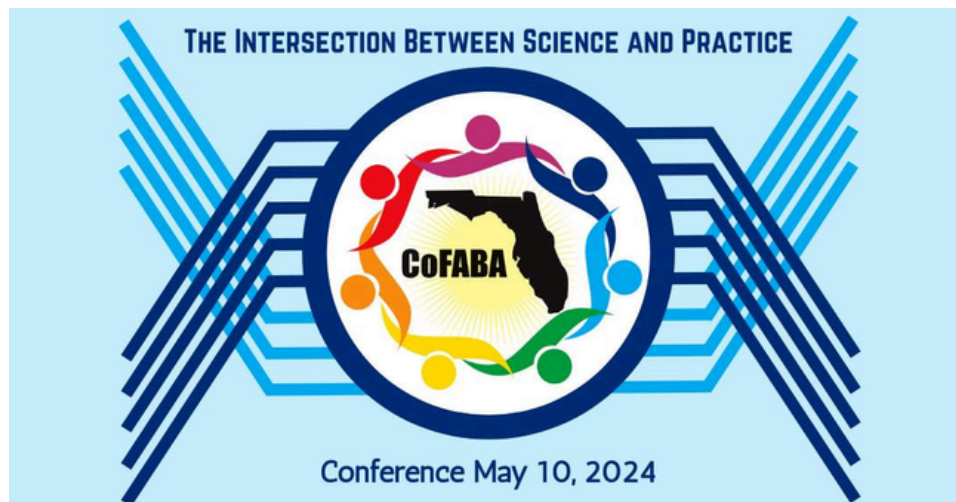
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THANK YOU FOR SUBSCRIBING!

AS WE BRING THIS EDITION OF THE OBSERVER TO A CLOSE, WE'RE THRILLED TO RECONNECT WITH OUR MEMBERS IN THIS FRESH FORMAT WHILE STAYING TRUE TO THE ESSENCE OF OUR PUBLICATION. EMBRACING THE DIGITAL ERA, WE'RE COMMITTED TO CONTINUING OUR MISSION OF DISSEMINATING INVALUABLE ABA INSIGHTS. KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER LATER THIS YEAR! IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS FOR ARTICLES OR WAYS TO ENHANCE THE OBSERVER, PLEASE DON'T HESITATE TO REACH OUT TO OUR COMMITTEE CHAIRS AT MCASTANOS@FABAWORLD.ORG OR LLLOVERAS@FABAWORLD.ORG.

THANKS FOR BEING A PART OF THE FABA FAMILY!

Upcoming Events:



FABA 2024

JW MARRIOTT MIAMI TURNBERRY RESORT

44th ANNUAL MEETING | SEPTEMBER 18-21, 2024