Evidence-Based Approaches to Toilet Training

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ACI Learning Centers’ origin was parent-driven out of a need for quality applied behavior analysis (ABA) services in the Kansas City area. Nancy Champlin, BCBA, responded to this need by starting a center-based program offering behaviorally-based social skills groups for preschool age children in 2002. Immediately, parents observed the tremendous benefits of a center-based facility and ACI has been helping children, young adults and their families ever since!

One of the reasons ACI stands out above other ABA providers, is Ms. Champlin’s ongoing commitment to providing exemplary services for the individuals and families ACI serves. Once other professionals learned of Nancy’s vision, ACI was able to expand services across the nation.

About ACI Learning Centers

ACI Learning Centers
DSM V

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - Verbal and nonverbal communication deficits
  - Deficits in social communication and social interaction
  - Restricted, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities
What is toilet training?

Toilet training includes the following:

- Desensitization to the bathroom, toilet, and flushing
- Elimination in the toilet
- Reduction of accidents
- Urine schedule training
- Bowel schedule training
- Manding to use the restroom independently
- Personal hygiene skills such as: *wiping, cleaning, washing hands, etc.*
- Independence in the entire toileting process
Why teach the toilet training process?

- Toilet training is an important skill for kindergarten readiness
- Reduces reliance on parent involvement in the toileting process
- Increases independence in daily living skills
- Socially significant behavior for change
- Saves money on diapers
Perquisites for toilet training

- Tolerate delays in reinforcement
- Basic motor imitation skills of novel actions
- Able and willing to follow a variety of listener instructions such as sit down, stand up, come here, etc.
- An established manding repertoire including manding for missing items or actions and/or mands for items not physically present
- A well established echoic skill set
- Not dependent on edibles as reinforcers but prefers tangibles and social reinforcement
- Not all are necessary, but success rates improve as the child is capable of more
Signs of readiness and when to begin training

• **Readiness signs**
  - Remaining dry for extended periods of time (one hour approximately)
  - Eliminating in certain locations (ie, in his room, behind couch, etc.)
  - Going into or requesting to be in the bathroom
  - Indicating discomfort of being wet, messy, or having eliminated in his/her diaper
  - Watching others or interest in others using the restroom
  - Pulling towards the restroom or asking for the bathroom

• **When to start toilet training**
  - Neurotypical children generally begin toilet training around 2 years of age, some earlier
  - Toilet training for children with developmental delays should begin once they are capable of the prerequisites and starting to show signs of readiness described above
Materials and items needed

During the toilet training process, the following items and considerations are needed:

**Timers**
To ensure the child goes to the bathroom on a schedule
To remind parents and caregivers of when to take the child

**Change of clothes**
Always need to have several changes of clothes available for accidents

**Diapers**
Should only be used at night while toilet training
The student no longer wears diapers during the training process

**Reinforcers**
A collection of highly preferred items and activities should be available to provide as reinforcers for using the toilet
Access to these outside of the training environment should be limited
Types of toilet training

- **Toilet training across a weekend or within one week**
  - Toilet training is drastically shortened with an increase in focus and emphasis on the toilet training process across a weekend or single week
  - Same procedures and tools are used but process is shortened and pace quickened
  - Generally used for students who are showing all signs and able to engage in all prerequisites
  - Requires 100% attention of the trainer (parent or therapist) during all times that toilet training is in effect
  - Should only be used if desensitization to the toilet, bathroom, or flushing is not required

- **Toilet training across several weeks and or months**
  - Spaces the training out across a longer period of time
  - Success is achieved at a slower, systematic, and methodical way
  - For children that may not have all prerequisites or may not be engaging in all signs of readiness
  - Easier to implement for parents and other caregivers
  - More of a focus on true independence rather than schedule training and simply eliminating accidents
Basic components of toilet training

• **Reinforcement**
  A highly preferred item(s), activity, or edible reinforcer should be used for eliminating in the toilet
  This reinforcer should NOT be available at any other time. This increases its value
  This reinforcer should be presented with VERY HIGH magnitude social reinforcement as well

• **Manding and functional communication training**
  Opportunities, prompts, and visual aids should be used to increase requests to use the toilet or go into the bathroom
  The toilet and bathroom should be called the same thing by all parties involved in the training (ie, toilet, potty, bathroom, etc.)
  The student should not be allowed in the bathroom without making some form of a request to use the restroom
Basic components of toilet training cont.

- **Schedules and timers**
  A timer is incredibly important to ensuring that all parties are prompting the student to use the restroom at the same time of the day or same duration between visits.
  The timer eventually becomes a prompt for the student in order to independently initiate.
  Schedules should be slowly and systematically faded across time.
  Schedules start by ensuring that every elimination occurs in the toilet and eventually moves toward the student having to request to use the restroom to ensure they get the reinforcer.

- **Sit duration and breaks from the bathroom**
  Initially the student spends a great deal of time in the bathroom and on the toilet to ensure we have success.
  This is slowly faded as the student begins to initiate, stops having accidents, and/or consistently holds to eliminate in the toilet.
Advanced components of toilet training

- **Positive practice**

  Positive punishment in the event of an accident

  The student is required to engage in the correct behaviors once an accident has happened and is repeated several times in succession

  *ie*, going back and forth from the point of the accident to the bathroom and briefly sitting on the toilet for 2 seconds and repeating the entire process 3-5 times

- **Fluid loading**

  A necessary component to ensure ample opportunities to eliminate in the toilet

  Initially begins with high fluid loading to make sure the child constantly needs to use the restroom

  Eventually this is faded to be more like typical levels of intake

  This is also faded as the student remains dry and consistently uses the restroom
Advanced components of toilet training cont.

- **Advanced prompting techniques**
  - Echoic to mand transfer
  - Tact to mand transfer
  - Additional transfer trial types
  - Visual aids
  - Proximity prompting
  - Pivot praise
Potty trained vs. schedule trained

- **Schedule trained**
  A student is able to remain dry and use the toilet correctly but relies on others for prompts to use the bathroom.
  Often “looks” like a student is toilet trained but still has accidents if not reminded to use the restroom.

- **Potty trained**
  Truly independent when using the bathroom.
  Does not require additional prompts to ask to use the restroom.
  Remains dry and uses the restroom without additional prompts.
  This is the ultimate goal and we have to be careful to not just schedule train.
  Manding is an important goal from the beginning.
Generalization of toilet training skills

Training setting to the home setting
- Use the same plan, familiar materials
- Same reinforcers
- Utilize the same language

Home or training setting to school
- Set up for success by making the school as similar to home and training as possible
- Use the same schedule and procedures from training setting

Novel and unfamiliar restrooms
- Set up for success by ensuring the need to go and access to the bathroom
- Introduce them to the unfamiliar restroom before needing to go
- Use the same reinforcers and rules for new bathrooms

Consult with a BCBA
- Seek help to better understand procedures before starting something.
- We are here to help!
Stay tuned!

ACI will be releasing new material and training information via our website!

Additional topics include:

- Social skills
- Token economies
- Activities of daily living
- And many more!