



# Comprehensive Aphasia Program

## Return to Your Life



**Return to Your Life** - Ontario's first and only comprehensive, intensive treatment programs for people with aphasia and communication challenges post-stroke and brain injury.

### What is Aphasia?

**Aphasia** is an acquired communication disorder, meaning that person wasn't born this way. The difficulties happened because of a stroke, brain injury, or brain illness. The damage happened in the language centre of the brain, making talking, understanding, reading, and/or writing difficult.

## What is an intensive comprehensive aphasia program?

Sometimes called an "ICAP," which stands for Intensive Comprehensive Aphasia Program, these programs vary slightly in how they are set up, who provides the therapy, the number of weeks and hours per day, etc. By definition, an ICAP contains **intensive** and **comprehensive** components:

**Intensive:** at least 3 hours per day of therapy for at least 2 weeks.

**Comprehensive:** addressing a wide range of individualized goals, incorporating multiple approaches to aphasia treatment, including:

- individual and group treatment
- technology
- education
- evidence-based therapy approaches to help people with aphasia improve and better participate in meaningful life activities.

More information about ICAPs can be found in this article: "Intensive Comprehensive Aphasia Programs: An International Survey of Practice" (Rose et al., 2013).

Only a handful of these programs exist in the world. This program is the **first** in **Ontario**. A 2012 survey showed that there were 12 programs in the world: 8 in the USA, 2 in Canada, 1 in Australia and 1 in the United Kingdom.

## What makes our program different?

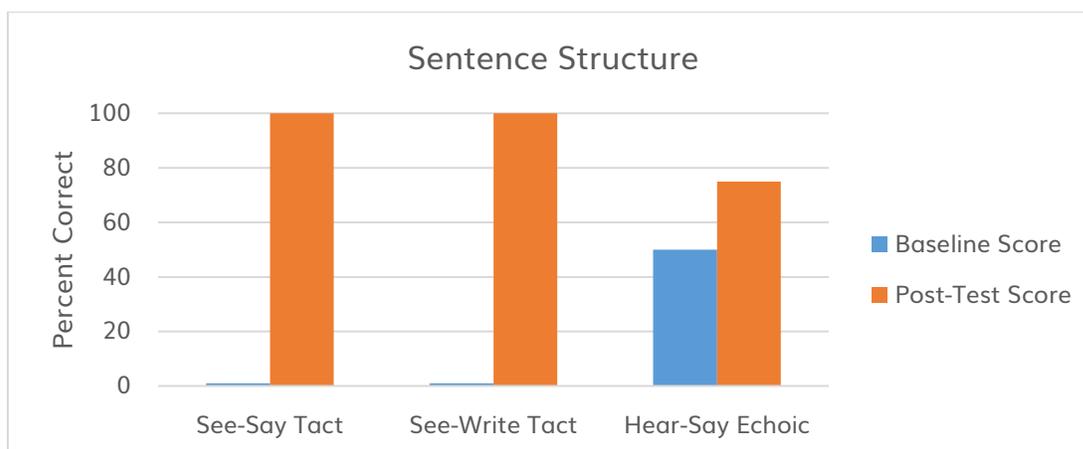
Our program involves **professional consultation** and **treatment** from an **interdisciplinary team**: Speech-Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Social Worker, Behaviour Analyst, and a Registered Behaviour Technician/Instructor.

Our team members **work closely together** to provide best practice, inter-professional, collaborative care.



We integrate the **medical or traditional model** of stroke and aphasia rehab, which involves Speech-Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy, into the **intensive treatment world**, which involves **Applied Behaviour Analysis**. The Speech-Language Pathologist is involved in the assessment, treatment, consultations, and program oversight for each client.

An important component of the intensive aphasia program includes **comprehensive ABA therapy**, which stands for **Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)**. ABA is a **behavioural approach** that is highly appropriate for individuals recovering from stroke with aphasia. ABA uses **repetition**, known to be effective in neurorehab, uses **client-focused goals**, and uses **data** to track treatment progress. **Functional tasks**, such as an individual writing a sentence based on a photo from the newspaper, would be broken down into small, **measurable steps** which would be recorded, tracked, and monitored to evaluate progress.



*Sample pre-post data for saying and writing complete sentences.*

The primary goal of ABA therapy is to develop an **individualized treatment plan** based on principles of learning theory to increase **activities of daily living** and **communication skills**, and ultimately carryover to learning or re-learning new skills. Currently no other intensive aphasia programs use this behavioural approach; this innovative project combines ABA with Speech-Language Pathology and Occupational therapy services in order for clients to make optimal gains.

# APPLIED BEHAVIOUR ANALYSIS & APHASIA

## What is ABA?

ABA applies learning theory to address skill deficits. A scientific approach to therapy based on proven theories of learning and behaviour. A BCBA understands how human behaviours are learned and how they can change over time.



### MEASURABLE

Behaviour Analysts identify behaviours that are measurable and observable.



### INCREASE ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOUR

Focus is on teaching new skills.



### DATA

Progress is monitored through data analysis.



### RESEARCH

Intervention is research-based and empirically-validated.



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## Our Interdisciplinary Team

### Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

- Provides **clinical intake assessment**
  - To better understand the client's **strengths and challenges**
    - A **comprehensive evaluation** of spoken and written language, looking at what the client understand and what they can express, using standardized aphasia assessments, speech and language assessments, and informal measures
  - To make recommendations for goals, strategies, and supports
- Makes **program recommendations** based on client goals and needs
  - Goals are highly individualized and client-centred
- Designs and develops treatment plan for individual SLP therapy sessions in consultation with the client and interdisciplinary team
- Provides **weekly therapy sessions** to target speech and/or language goals
- Facilitates weekly **team meetings** with the BCBA, OT, RBT, and SW
- **Supervises** the RBTs and oversees the client's program
- Completes family and/or caregiver **training in Supported Conversation Strategies**

### Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA)

- Designs and develops **intensive programs** for therapy sessions in consultation with the client and the SLP
- **Supervises** the RBT and oversees the client's programs
- Participates in **weekly team meetings**

- **Analyzes data** from therapy sessions to **monitor** the efficacy of the program and interventions

#### Registered Behaviour Technician (RBT)

- Facilitates **daily intensive therapy sessions** based on programs written by the BCBA in consultation with the SLP
- Record **daily data tracking** and **graphing** for skill acquisition programs
- Participate in weekly **team meetings**

#### Occupational Therapist (OT)

- Completes an initial **assessment** of fine motor movement
- **Designs and develops program** for therapy activities to be completed by the RBT
- **Supervises** the RBT and oversees the client's OT programming

#### Social Worker

- Meets with clients and/or caregivers 1:1 to provide support
  - **Mental health and counselling**
  - Connecting clients with **resources** in the community

## What is the weekly schedule?

Schedules can be **modified** to meet **individual needs** and **budgets**.

A 12-week, 5-day program could be divided into the following components:

- 15.5 hours of individual intensive ABA therapy per week with an instructor therapist (supervised by an SLP and BCBA)
- 2 hours of individual speech-language pathology therapy with an SLP (two 1-hour sessions)
- Family / caregiver training in supportive conversation strategies
- 30-minute daily lunch break (catered lunch)
- 3.5 hours of computer / technology time in a computer lab
- 1.5 hour life skills group (designed to target functional everyday living skills), which may also include goals for occupational therapy / fine motor skills
- ½ hour of Social Work therapy
- 2 hours of supported conversation group therapy with an SLP and assistant

These components are broken into sessions to create an individualized weekly schedule.

The Speech-Language Pathologist will discuss your **individual needs** at intake and make a **recommended treatment schedule** that fits with your **needs and budget**.

## What can I expect from the program?

The primary goal of the intensive aphasia program is to **enhance life participation**, improve **functional communication**, improve **confidence**, and improve **fine motor skills**.

## Who can benefit from the Comprehensive Aphasia Program?

- Participants must be 18 years or older
- Diagnosis of varying severity of aphasia and/or other communication impairment post-stroke or injury
- Individuals who are **medically stable**; living in the community
- Fluent in **English** prior to the stroke or injury
- Individuals who want to regain **functional communication skills**
- People with aphasia who are **motivated** to learn and try new things
- No/minimal **cognitive** difficulties
- Client care needs (i.e., toileting, feeding, transportation) are **met** by the client or caregiver
- Available for **assessment** prior to program start date

Positive outcomes have resulted from **intensive programs** that provide 5-10 hours per week over **8-12 weeks**, as opposed to programs that provide 2-4 hours per week 20-26 weeks (Bhogal, Teassell & Speechley, 2003). There is strong evidence to show that Speech-Language Pathology treatment at a **high intensity** (i.e., >5 hrs / week) is effective, even for chronic aphasia (Breitenstein et al., 2017).

**Recovery** during rehabilitation post-stroke or injury is complex and involves many factors, including:

- the location and extend of the brain damage (i.e., where was it, how much of the brain was affected)
- client motivation and personal beliefs
- support system (family, caregiver support, friends)

## **What is the cost of the program?**

The program cost includes:

- Comprehensive evaluation of speech and language skills
- Speech-Language Pathologist sessions (individual, group, and consultation)
- Education for client and caregivers about aphasia
- Occupational Therapy-based sessions (individual and/or group, if needed)
- Individual intensive ABA therapy
- Social work counselling and therapy for client and caregiver (if needed)
- Computer-based technology therapy
- Group outings (e.g., KW Art Gallery, grocery store, coffee shops, etc.)
- Daily catered lunch

Costs of the program vary depending on individual needs; please **contact us** to discuss your budget and needs.

Many clients will use **private medical insurance** to cover part or all of the costs of the intensive program.

Ask your private insurance company about your coverage, which may include:

- Critical illness insurance coverage
- Speech-language therapy benefits
- Occupational therapy benefits

Please note that schedules can be **modified** to meet  
**individual needs and budgets.**

## What will we work on in therapy?

The benefit of our interdisciplinary program is that the goals are **highly individualized**.

Here are some examples of client goals that could be targeted within the program:

- Send a text message to a friend without assistance
- Write an email
- Read a bedtime story to my grandson
- Plan, grocery shop, and cook a meal on my own
- Initiate conversation with my husband
- Prepare and give a PowerPoint presentation
- Order my own food at a restaurant
- Explain to others about my aphasia and strategies that work for me
- Understand a news article
- Say all of my family members' names clearly
- Record details from a voicemail message

## What can I do in Waterloo?



Waterloo is a dynamic, urban centre located in the heart of Southern Ontario.

Waterloo has been consistently voted as one of Canada's "smartest cities," and is home to the University of Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier University, and Conestoga College.

With convenient access to domestic and international flights through Waterloo Airport, or one-hour from Toronto's Pearson International Airport, Waterloo is easy to get to from almost anywhere in Canada.

## Where can I stay?

Accommodation is available in Waterloo:

- Hotels
- Air Bnbs [www.airbnb.ca](http://www.airbnb.ca)
- Long-term stay residence in

Kitchener: <https://www.stayrcc.com/locations/kitchener-waterloo/extended-stays/>

Please note that accommodation is not included in program fees. For assistance with accommodation options available in Waterloo, please contact us.

## Questions?

For questions about our intensive aphasia services and the Comprehensive Aphasia Program, please contact us at **Monarch House** at [waterloo@monarchhouse.ca](mailto:waterloo@monarchhouse.ca) or by calling (519) 514-5770.

Private, individual Speech-Language Pathology and/or Occupational Therapy services are also available at this location.