

# 'Lack of experts leaves autistic kids in danger'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Chennai:** Lack of behavioural analysts in India is affecting treatment of autistic children, said speakers at the fourth annual conference of the Association of Behaviour Analysis (ABA India).

The conference was inaugurated in Chennai on Saturday with a view to guiding parents on seeking the right treatment for their children affected by autism spectrum disorder.

With increasing awareness on autism and a rise in the number of cases, the issue is that there are very few professionals trained to treat autistic children. "More parents are seeking ABA interventions, but there are only 12 certified behavioural analysts in India," said Gita Srikanth, vice-president south, ABA India. Gita, who is also the only certi-

fied behavioral analyst in TN, said there was none in Kerala or Andhra Pradesh and the conference was held in Chennai to raise awareness in the south.

ABA India is an NGO affiliated to ABA International USA, which is working to increase awareness on applied behaviour analysis, a scientific method to treat the disorder.

## RAISING AWARENESS

Experts say the method has proved to be most effective for autistic children as the issues posed

by the spectrum disorder is disparate and the treatment is designed to address every child's needs.

"If a child is not communicating, we teach the child to express himself using the techniques," said Smitha Awasti, founder, ABA India. "It helps children improve appropriate behaviour like walking, writing and sitting on a chair."