PBS Practice

The purpose of the series on PBS Practices is to provide information about important elements of positive behavior support. PBS Practices are not specific recommendations for implementation, and they should always be considered within the larger context of planning, assessment and comprehensive support.

Collaborative Teaming in PBS

Positive behavioral support involves designing interventions based on a thorough understanding of the circumstances affecting a person's behavior and implementing those interventions within typical daily routines and environments. To achieve these ends, PBS requires open communication and coordinated effort among all individuals participating in the support process. Collaboration entails people who know and care about the focus individual sharing responsibility, resources, and a positive vision for their success.

Features of effective collaboration:
1. Mutual trust and respect
2. Shared goals and objectives
3. Open, respectful communication
4. Effective conflict resolution
5. Equity in task distribution
6. Consensus decision-making
7. Ongoing problem solving

Collaboration in positive behavioral support means that a team, made up of the individual, their family and friends, and service providers from various disciplines and environments, engage in all aspects of the support process.

Example: Joey is having behavioral difficulties on community outings (e.g., job training, trips to the grocery store). Joey, his parents, coworkers, and job coach meet to discuss their concerns and establish goals. Then (with assistance from someone with training in PBS) the team works together to gather information and identify conditions affecting Joey's behavior. Using what they learned as a foundation, the team designs a support plan that will fit in their environments and that they feel capable of implementing. They put it in place and continue to meet periodically to monitor the progress and celebrate their success.

Nonexample: Joey is having behavioral difficulties on community outings. The supported employment agency contracts with an outside expert to complete a functional behavioral assessment and develop a program. The consultant observes Joey in the community, administers a rating scale with his job coach, and then writes up a report with recommendations. The consultant presents the plan to the 'team,' tells them what to do and how to take data, and fields questions as needed. Joey's support providers have not had input into the assess-ment or intervention, but are expected to implement the strategies.

Effective collaboration requires that systems (e.g., agencies) be organized so that they support creative, cooperative activities, rather than embracing hierarchical structures in which individuals with disabili-

ties, family members, and direct service providers are undervalued. Collaboration often involves over-coming attitudinal barriers and extending participation in team activities beyond typical parameters.

Frequently-Asked Questions

1. *Collaboration is fine in theory, but realistically it is extremely time-consuming. How many more meetings can a person take*? Collaboration does not necessarily mean meetings; it requires finding a forum for open communication and working together. However, it is true that collaboration requires time. The challenge is to use time effectively and efficiently. If a good deal of time is currently being spent managing crises, attempting ineffective strategies, or addressing conflict among team members, that time would be better channeled into more productive, collaborative activities.

2. *What do you do when some of the team members refuse to collaborate, or even react with resistance or hostility?* PBS teaches us that people behave in certain ways for a reason. If members of the team are responding in ways that affect the collaborative effort, it would be important to investigate why (e.g., When do they behave that way? How do people respond?). It may be that they are being left out of discussions or are not committed to the outcomes identified by the rest of the team (or a host of other issues). With understanding, it may be possible to draw them back into the process and support more positive interaction.

Other Resources

    Hieneman, M. & Dunlap, G. (1999). Issues and challenges in implementing community-based behavioral support for two boys with severe disabilities. In J.R. Scotti & L.H. Meyer (Eds.), Behavioral intervention: Principles, models, and practices (pp.363-384). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes

    Turnbull, A.P. & Turnbull, H.R. (1996). Group action planning as a strategy for providing comprehensive family support. In L.K. Koegel, R.L. Koegel, & G. Dunlap (Eds.) Positive behavioral support: Including people with difficult behavior in the community (pp. 99-114). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

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