Module One
Positive Behavior Supports

Training Outcomes

1. Participants will understand the philosophy of positive behavior supports.

2. Participants will understand the ethical implications when working on programs to change the behavior of others.

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THEORY OVERVIEW

Positive behavioral support is an approach for helping people develop social and communication skills, and create a positive environment for learning and social growth (Koegel, Koegel, & Dunlap, 1996). Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) is grown out of the movement to give people with challenging behaviors a greater, more inclusive quality of life. The PBS movement draws from research in applied behavior analysis and provides the foundation for positive behavior supports. It often consists of a comprehensive set of strategies that help redesign environments so that problem behaviors may be prevented and to teach people new skills that can make problem behavior unnecessary. Previous behavior management strategies have focused primarily on consequences the person would receive when engaging in inappropriate behavior. As with the term, the focus of positive behavior supports moves toward positive and reinforcing environments and interventions, and away from punishing ones. Positive behavioral support reflects a shift in perspective, one that assumes that although problem behavior is a concern, it is not the primary focus (Risley, 1996; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1996). Instead, "one must look away from the problem behavior and focus instead on teaching new behaviors..." (Risley, 1996, p. 426). Reduction of problem behavior is important, but only in the context of life style change and inclusion. The outcomes of behavioral support have clearly moved away from the narrow focus on problem behavior. Positive behavior support also teaches that when supports center upon a person's strengths, problematic situations will be less likely to occur.

Some of the important elements of positive behavior support include:
- empowerment to the person
- socially meaningful outcomes and goals
- functional assessment of the problem behavior
- multiple behavior support strategies
- creating positive, learning-friendly environments

When implemented, positive behavior supports can lead to many positive outcomes for people, including:
- enhanced community participation
- enhanced social relationships
- enhanced choice making
- enhanced respect and dignity
- personal growth

☞ In your view, what are the advantages to using positive behavior supports?

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BASICS OF BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Behavior is response to stimuli. It is observable and measurable. If it does not meet that criteria it is not considered to be behavior.

Behavior management involves changing a current behavior or teaching a new behavior through effectively manipulating environmental events and consequences. Emphasis is placed on environmental, situational, and social determinants that influence behavior. Behaviors are learned or alterable through the learning process. Behavior is accounted for by certain learning experiences.

Abnormal behavior is inferred from the degree to which behavior deviates from the social norms.

ABC's of Behavior Support

A=Antecedent
B=Behavior
C=Consequence

Antecedent: An antecedent is anything which occurs just before the problem behavior and can include such factors as people, times, events, places, and even chains of behavior. Antecedents always precede a behavior and set the occasion for the behavior. The first step in changing a behavior may be changing the antecedent in some way. A chain of behaviors might be aborted by intervening with the first behavior in a chain instead of waiting until the individual gets out of control with the last behavior in the chain.

Behavior: The observable and measurable action. A behavior management program can only do two things: behavior can be decreased or increased. When decreasing an

inappropriate behavior you must either increase an already existing appropriate behavior or determine a replacement behavior. An appropriate behavior management program strategy is to decrease the inappropriate behavior while increasing several appropriate behaviors.

Consequence: The events that follow a behavior and serve to motivate it. There are only two consequences that can follow a behavior. First, the consequence can be something that actually increases the behavior (a positive reinforcer). Second is punishment that decreases the probability of the behavior occurring in the future.

1. A **Reinforcer** is anything that follows a behavior that will increase or maintain the occurrence of that behavior. A positive consequence (reinforcer) can be anything. Individuals often differ and even the same person over time changes their tastes for various positive reinforcers. The positive aspect of a reinforcer can also change for an individual. What starts out as a positive reinforcer may end up losing its positive value if one gets too much of it. This is called satiation. Variety in selecting reinforcers is the only protection against satiation.

2. **Punishment** is different. Punishment is defined as reducing or decreasing a behavior by applying some type of stimulus, consequence or taking away a positive reinforcer after a response. It is the opposite of positive or negative reinforcement; punishment is anything that follows a behavior that will decrease the likelihood of the behavior occurring again. The only way to tell if a consequence is a punisher or reinforcer is to see if the behavior goes up (increase = reinforcer) or goes down (decreases = punisher) after a consequence is given.

Behavior support relies on learning to change behavior through modifying the person's environment and by introducing various reinforcers and punishers. These interventions will be further discussed in Modules Three and Four.

☞ Quickly think of a challenging behavior of a person you support. Try to briefly examine this behavior by using the "A-B-C" format.
A=_____
B=_____
C=_____

☞ Is the consequence to this behavior a punisher or reinforcer of the behavior?

_____

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PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS

For positive behavior supports to work, the person or organization implementing the supports must be committed to the philosophies and attitudes behind PBS. People must be treated with respect and dignity at all times, and maintaining their personal dignity in all interactions is paramount. Part of developing a philosophy that supports positive approaches includes having an ethics or human rights review process. Organizations utilizing PBS often put each intervention used through an intensive ethics test.

Ethics tests demand the use of positive supports. The premise is that the least intrusive interventions are the first line of intervention. It is assumed that staff will demonstrate skills to redirect a situation before a crisis arises. The ethics assessment demands that behavior interventions are assessed and meet the following criteria:

1. Positive: Least intrusive systems starting with positive and teaching interventions are critical. It is expected that all staff can demonstrate a continuum of non-physical, positive approaches before interacting physically with others, as shown in the positive behavior supports pyramid.

2. Humane: Positive behavior supports adheres to the philosophy that inflicting physical or emotional pain under any circumstances is abusive.

3. Socially Valid: Interventions implemented are accepted by society and fit within social norms.

4. Legal: It is expected that staff implement support strategies that meet all legal obligations for interacting with others.

5. Researched: Interventions implemented to support others have a foundational background of being successful and acceptable.

(Support, Options, Actions for Respect, 2003, p.)

☞ Chose the one of the most common behavior interventions you use with someone who has challenging behaviors.

Intervention _____

☞
   Now take a few minutes and give this intervention an "ethics test." What did you find out about this intervention? Did it pass the ethics test? What questions do you still have?

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Least Restrictive Behavior Interventions (LRBI)

In the State of Utah one standard for PBS is the LRBI: Positive Behavioral Supports and Selection of Least Restrictive Behavioral Intervention. It is the guideline for behavioral planning for children and youth established by the Utah State Office of Education. A similar standard is recommended by the Division of Service for People with Disabilities.

The purpose is to assure that procedures for positive behavioral interventions and supports are implemented in an appropriate manner to assure the rights of people and increase the probability of changing challenging behavior.

The LRBI is based on the premise of a hierarchy of intervention procedures.   The State Office of Education's guidelines are based on five levels of intervention.

LRBI (Least Restrictive Behavior Interventions) Hierarchy of Intervention Procedures

- **Preliminary Strategies:** Positive environments are structured for people. There should be an assurance that positive environments and effective strategies are in place before moving into any specific level of intervention. This becomes critical when the team is contemplating more intrusive levels of intervention.

- **Level I: Positive Intervention Procedures:** Positive behavioral supports and effective educational practices should be in place at all times and across all settings.

- **Level II: Mildly Intrusive Procedures:** Interventions that have a mild punishing

effect to the presentation of a problem behavior. There needs to be assurance that positive behavior supports are in place before using any intrusive interventions.

There are many cautions related to implementation of moderately to highly intrusive procedures. These procedures are most often used with seriously aggressive or injurious behaviors to the person or others. These interventions **are not** to be implemented for minor behavior problems.

- **Level III: Moderately Intrusive Procedures**

- **Level IV: Highly Intrusive Procedures**

The LRBI process outlines specific criteria when there is a crisis situation that requires an emergency procedure. An emergency procedure is intended for when there is a serious threat of injury to the person, others, or severe property damage. If emergency procedures occur more than once a week, two times a month, or a total of four times in a year, a written behavior intervention program addressing the procedures for implementing more intrusive interventions is developed.

The LRBI procedure places certain expectations on people providing behavioral supports to people with challenging behaviors.

The LRBI Process:

1. Assure that preliminary strategies are in place across settings of the person's environment.
2. Identify a target behavior.
3. Preform a functional assessment of the target behavior.
4. Determine appropriate interventions based on the functional assessment. It is important to remember the procedure for using least intrusive interventions.
6. Implement the plan and start data collection of selected interventions.
7. Monitor program effectiveness.
8. Maintain intervention, adjust, or fade intervention.
9. Monitor for maintenance of the desired behavior.

The LRBI will be discussed in more detail in later modules.

Glossary

A-B-C: A common abbreviation used to refer to antecedent, behavior, and consequence.

Abnormal Behavior: The degree to which behavior deviates from the social norms.

Applied Behavioral Analysis: The science of studying the observable patterns of behavior and the environmental interactions. The techniques allow the observer to have clear knowledge of how specific interventions or tehniques may be affecting certain behaviors.

Antecedent: An antecedent is anything which occurs just before the problem behavior and can include such factors as people, times, events, places, and even chains of behavior. Antecedents always precede a behavior and set the occasion for the behavior. An event that immediately precedes a behavior.

Behavior: An act, movement, and/or response to an internal or external stimulus that is observable and can be measured.

Consequence: The events that follow a behavior that influence the frequency of future behavior. Consequences can be reinforcing or punishing..

Ethics: Standard of right or wrong. A system of conduct or behavior, moral principles.

Functional Assessment: The process of collecting information to develop a hypothesis regarding what the triggers and consequences of a behavior. Strategies utilized include indirect assessment methods, information gathering, direct observation, and functional assessment.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) One that allows the person to participate in inclusive environments as much as possible while meeting his or her special needs.

Positive Approaches "Approaches that enhance a person's life. They are characterized by collaboration versus control and focus more on illumination (or understanding the meaning of the behavior from the person's point of view) than on elimination (or reducing behaviors we perceive to be difficult or unacceptable)." (Weiss, 1999)

Positive Behavior Support (PBS):   A broad set of systemic and individualized strategies designed to achieve important learning outcomes and an enhanced quality of life while preventing the occurrence of problem behavior (Horner, Sugai, and Durand, 2002 PBS Conference).

Problem or Challenging Behavior Behavior emitted by a person that results in self-injury, injury to others, damage to environment, prevents acquisition of new skills and/or socially isolates the person (University of Minnesota).

Punishment: Reducing or decreasing a behavior by applying some type of stimulus, consequence or taking away a positive reinforcer after a response. It is the opposite of positive or negative reinforcement. A punisher is anything that follows a behavior that will decrease the likelihood of the behavior occurring again**.**

Quality of Life: Elements existing in a person's life which indicate they are living a life of stability, social belonging, empowerment and controls and satisfaction.

Reinforcer: Anything that follows a behavior that will increase or maintain the occurrence of that behavior.

Respect: To feel or show esteem towards another person. To treat with consideration.

Stimulus: Anything that elicits or evokes action in a person or creates a response in muscle, nerve, glad or other body tissue or organ.

Trigger: Stimulus or event that sets in motion an action.

Resources and Suggested Readings

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