MIKE MIKLOS: Problem behavior should be addressed through a function-based approach. A function-based approach means that you determine what events usually precede problem behavior and what events occur after the problem behavior. A functional analysis is often used to determine why problem behavior occurs. Determining the function means identifying the reinforcement that may be maintaining problem behavior. We will not cover functional analysis in this program.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: Children with autism often exhibit problem behavior when they are asked to transition from one activity to another.

TEACHER: Show me. Ready hands.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: The problem behavior may be reinforced by the child experiencing a delay in having to make the transition. The removal of the demand to transition or the child being able to avoid giving up the preferred ongoing activity. This training will provide and overview of how to teach children to make successful transitions. The primary focus will be on teaching children to make transition successfully using a systematic approach. The interaction transition procedures presented here are adapted from teaching procedures developed by Dr. Vincent Carbone and his staff at the Carbone Clinic. However, the basic principles for teaching successful transitions and reducing the value of problem behavior by teaching competing skills is well-established in the behavioral literature. The procedures described in this training are based on the assumption that most problem behavior occurring as a result of an interruption and request for transition are maintained by the child escaping compliance or more technically socially mediated negative reinforcement or maintaining access to the preferred activity or technically socially mediated positive reinforcement. There are two main components to teaching successful transition skills, the first, is a specific training protocol in which the value of making transition established. In other words, the child is taught that making successful transitions is a good thing. This training will mostly emphasize such preventative steps. The second component is the process of making sure that when problem behavior occurs following a request to transition that it does not contact reinforcement. This protocol involves a systematic establishment of a transition hierarchy. In other words, the student is taught to make transitions first from activities that are not strongly preferred to short and easy transitions. Gradually, with success, transitions of greater distance and from more preferred activities are introduced. Initially, the value of making the transition is established through use of a promise reinforcer. And through limiting the transition to only very short distances.

TEACHER: Give iPad.

STUDENT: No [inaudible]

TEACHER: Go, sit here for iPad. Sit down. IPad. Very nice.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: A promise reinforcer involves showing a child a preferred item prior to presenting the instruction. The promise reinforcer establishes motivation to comply with the requested transition.

TEACHER: Give Elmo.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: This will ensure that the value of problem behavior does not come to strength. In order to track the interruption-transition skill sequence, instructors will use trial by trial data collection for each target trial run throughout the day. Teachers will keep track of how the child performs on each target trial run. A target may be considered mastered when the student complies on 90% of target trials for two consecutive days. This suggestion is a rule of thumb. Actual mastery criteria may need to be altered depending on the students' rate of skill acquisition. Before beginning this program, the student will need to be able to comply with simple directions that will be involved in the process. Errorless procedures in this process involved the use of a promise reinforcer and sequence and targets from easy to harder transitions. Let's watch an example of a sequence of transitions from easiest to hardest.

TEACHER: Touch fire truck.

STUDENT: Fire truck.

TEACHER: Do this one.

STUDENT: I know.

TEACHER: Sit here. Touch magnifying glass.

STUDENT: Glass.

TEACHER: Sit here. Touch bananas.

STUDENT: Bananas.

TEACHER: What is it?

STUDENT: Guitar.

TEACHER: Sit here. Good sitting. Do this one. Touch the van.

STUDENT: The van.

TEACHER: Sit here. Good sitting. Good sitting.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: Noticed how the instructor started off by having the student transition to a chair that was only a foot away. Gradually, she increased the distance to five feet and then ten feet away. Once the student is able to successfully make transitions at various distances then the teacher begins to fade the promise reinforcer.

TEACHER: Come here. Back here. Here's Elmo.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: The teacher will then fade in transitions to more than one location.

TEACHER: Angelina, come here. Give. Sit here. Sit there. Good sitting.

STUDENT: Elmo. Elmo.

TEACHER: Give. Sit here. Sit here. Sit here. Here comes Elmo. Give Elmo. Sit there. Sit there. Sit here. Here's the iPod.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: Other variables to include would be transitioning to locations where peers are present as well as increasing the number of tasks completed at each location.

TEACHER: Give mirror.

STUDENT: Mirror.

TEACHER: Sit there.

STUDENT: Sit there.

TEACHER: Good. Sit there. Stack LEGOS.

STUDENT: LEGO.

TEACHER: Stack LEGOS.

STUDENT: LEGO.

TEACHER: Sit there. Good sitting. Here's your mirror.

STUDENT: [inaudible]

TEACHER: Sit there. Ready hands. Good. Sit here. Match. Sit here. Sit there. Sit here.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: Notice how each time a different target level is introduced, the teacher reinstates the use of a promise reinforcer. As the steps are mastered, the promise reinforcer is again faded.

TEACHER: Sit there. Ready hands. Sit here. Match. Sit here. Do puzzle. Sit there.

STUDENT: [inaudible]

TEACHER: You're back.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: When teaching a target level of interruption, staff will need to remember to intersperse practice transition trials at already mastered levels of compliance.

TEACHER: Do this one. Cross legs. Come here. Good. Good, here's the headband.

STUDENT: Headband.

AMIRIS DIPUGLIA: This will lead to indiscriminable contingencies. The student will not know when they will be asked to make a target level transition, but they will know that most transitions are fairly easy to make. Additionally, remember to run interruption-transition trials in various locations across instructors and at various times and the student stay to allow skill generalization. Instructors will also need to make

sure they are varying the reinforcers used as a promise. If a student does not comply with the request to transition, the promise reinforcer is removed and compliance with the transition directed is prompted. This will ensure that the demand to transition is not avoided through problem behavior. Remember that not removing the demand to transition is an extinction procedure. Extinction can result an increase in magnitude of problem behavior. Therefore, teams always need to consider the safety of the student and others as first priority when using any extinction procedure. Careful use of effective prompts and prompt fading can reduce extinction effects. If errors occur during instruction of interruption-transition, teaching staff will need to review why the problem behavior occurred. This will involve reviewing the quality of promise reinforcer used, the difficulty of directions presented, the frequency of practice, and the value of the interrupted ongoing activity.

MIKE MIKLOS: Many interventions to reduce problem behavior fail because they are not implemented consistently. It is advised to treatment integrity procedures be used to help make consistent implementation of interruption-transition procedures more likely. Interruption-transition training will continue until the student is able to make successful transitions during all or most naturally occurring opportunities.