

Positive Behavior Support: Behavior Assessment to Review

An Overview

Positive Behavior Support

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a research-based process where support strategies are applied to an individual's life that increase quality of life and decrease difficult behavior. This occurs by creating positive ways to get needs met through accommodations of the environment and personal interactions. PBS strategies are effective interventions that increase an individual's success, personal satisfaction, and positive social interactions. Positive Behavior Support achieves increases in quality of life that characterize an individual's preferences, needs, and social belonging. (APBS, 2010)

PBS is based upon behavioral and medical science both. This begins by understanding that behavior is considered purposeful and under the control of environmental factors that can be changed. PBS assessment and strategies emphasize support to the individual that are effective in natural everyday settings. The PBS process uses information related to an individual's mental health or medical issues to assist in understanding the interaction between the physical and environmental factors that influence behavior. (APBS, 2010)

PBS uses Person Centered Planning

Person-centered planning is used in PBS to supply important insights into the specific needs and goals of the individual. This information drives the creation of supports carefully tailored with individuality. Specific individual needs are considered to produce a support plan that emphasizes:

- meaningful social relationships
- respect from others
- enhancement of personal abilities
- choice and decision making

Person-centered tools assess strengths rather than deficits and problems. Person-centered planning assumes if an individual's needs are met, then quality of life will improve, and problem behavior will be reduced or eliminated altogether. (Carr, et. al, 2002)

Behavior Assessment

Behavior assessment is the PBS process where information is gathered to understand difficult behavior. An assessment approach is used that asks the right questions of the right people to gain understanding of what the individual's behavior communicates. Completing the behavior assessment and using the information gathered is a beginning step for effective and efficient positive behavior plans.

A variety of assessment techniques are used in behavior assessment. Interviews with people who know the individual well are usually a first step. Observing, interacting, and/or interviewing the individual in natural surroundings provides further information. Data gathered in different settings provides insight to what environments, activities, people, or situations trigger the difficult behavior. A behavior assessment provides:

- a clear description of the difficult behavior,
- identification of underlying issues such as medical or mental health challenges
- identification of what events predict and follow difficult behavior, and



- an educated guess (summary statements) about why the behavior happens.(O'Neill, 1997)

Behavior Plan

Behavior planning results from a behavior assessment and is collected into an individualized support plan. Strategies chosen for the plan are based on natural supports to be established in the social network and environments that surround an individual. An individual's social network includes family, caregivers, and friends. Important features of the final Behavior Plan are:

- Active support tools exist in the extended circle of the social network,
- Redesign of the environment, including architecture, and
- Sequences of predictable daily routines which include personal preferences.

The Behavior Plan focuses on preventing difficult behavior. PBS is an approach in which support strategies are implemented in a proactive fashion to reduce difficult behavior. Further, PBS builds the Behavior Plan on an individual's strengths and creates living environments that support a rich quality of life. (Carr, et. al, 2002)

Training

PBS approaches training with careful planning of who is trained and where. Training involves families, caregivers, friends, administrators, and professionals. Training content includes problem solving within real-life situations for a sufficient amount time to produce effective capability in those trained. Training gives primary focus to implementation of the Behavior Plan by all those that regularly interact with the individual. Support strategies are modeled, detailed, and practiced until they are natural and integrated fully in daily life. (Carr, et. al, 2002)

Review, adaptation, revision, and modification

PBS provides support for individuals. It is vital for an effective support plan to understand it is a fluid process. The Behavior Plan is used for real world support to an individual with real world problems and issues. Those issues change over time. The Plan has to fit the people and environment where the support is needed. As the Plan is implemented adaptations may be needed to make it effective. Also, the individual will change due to the passage of time, because of a deteriorating condition, or at other times fluctuating functioning. That causes a Behavior Plan to need revision or modifications over time. Periodic review of the Behavior Plan is required to maintain an effective Plan for the daily care needs of the individual. The review may result in simple revisions or more comprehensive modifications of the Plan. Review may also demonstrate a need to update the Behavior Assessment. An entirely new Behavior Plan may be created. Quality review is essential to effective positive behavior support at least once a year and more frequently as change takes place. New caregivers or other regulars to the social network will need training also. Positive behavior support continually incorporates a circular process of support- if an individual's needs are met, then quality of life will improve, and problem behavior will be reduced or eliminated altogether.

References:

Functional Assessment and Program Development for Problem Behavior: A Practical Handbook, Second Edition (1997); O'Neill, et al., Brook/Cole Publishing Company.

"Positive Behavior Support: Evolution of an Applied Science", Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions Vol. 4, Winter 2002, Carr, et al., Association of Positive Behavior Support, 2010, www.apbs.org

