

Preschool Field Officer Service

Behaviour – Individualised Interventions

“In most cases, behaviour is a sign children may not have the skills to tell you what they need. Sometimes, students may not even know what they need. What are your students trying to communicate? What do they need, and how can you help? Figuring out the function of, or the reasons behind, a behavior is critical for finding an appropriate response or support. Knowing the function can also help you find ways to prevent behavior issues in the future.” (<https://www.understood.org/en/articles/understanding-behavior-as-communication-a-teachers-guide>)

What is an individualised intervention?

Research shows a program wide model is the most effective way of providing behaviour support to all children, including those with persistent challenging behaviour. (See Guiding Children’s Behaviour Tip Sheet) However, research indicates approximately 4% of children with persistent challenging behaviour will require an individualised intervention. For these children a systematically designed and consistently implemented plan is needed – also known as a Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBS)

What is involved in developing a Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBS)?

A PBS plan involves conducting a Functional Behavioural Assessment (a copy of a Functional Behaviour Assessment form will be provided with this tip sheet). This involves:

- Identifying the factors that trigger the behaviour – environmental factors such as interactions or activities
- Identifying the function of the behaviour and brainstorming possible reasons for the behaviour occurring:
 - Is the child ESCAPING/AVOIDING from something
 - Is the child seeking ATTENTION
 - Is the child attempting to OBTAIN something
 - Is the child seeking SENSORY input or avoiding sensory input
- Identifying replacement behaviour – a more appropriate behaviour or skill the child can learn to replace the problem behaviour – it needs to be something the child can do *as easily* as the problem behaviour.
- Teaching the replacement behaviour – replacement skills must be efficient and effective, and take into consideration what skills the child already has. To teach the replacement behaviour:
 - Select the skill you want to teach
 - Select a method to teach the skill – teach the skill intentionally using planned experiences and teach throughout the day
 - State clearly what is expected
- Developing strategies that support a child to learn the new skill and determining ways of responding to the child in a way that reinforces the new skill. Respond to the problem behaviour in a way that will

make it ineffective by making sure attention/encouragement for appropriate behaviour exceeds attention/feedback for the problem behaviour.

- Reviewing the plan: Plan meeting to catch up to review progress and to ensure all members of the team are 'on the same page', and to discuss any issues.
- A PBS plan should be comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, and developed in partnership with the family and the team around the child, for example, Educator, Speech Pathologist, Psychologist, Occupational Therapist and Child Care Educator – if involved.

Note: It is important to identify if the 'problem' behaviour is developmentally expected for a child of that age. For example, if a child never sits on the mat, it would not be considered problem behaviour if the child is chronologically four years of age, but developmentally functioning as a 3 year old.

Are there any tips for developing the PBS plan?

- Develop the plan using plain language that can be clearly understood by everyone
- Make sure the plan will fit with routines/activities/values of family and educators
- Develop mini-plans for difficult routines to ensure each team member has clarity on each step
- Develop an action plan for who will produce the components to implement the plan e.g. visual prompts – dot points are great.
- Plan must include the competing demands on educators and family
- Make sure all educators in the room are aware of the plan and the actions required to implement it
- Make copies of the plan when complete and provide a copy to **each member** of the team

Will it work?

Please Consider: *"If there is anything we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could be better changed in ourselves"*

The effectiveness of the plan will depend on consistent implementation across the child's everyday routine – at home, at kinder, at Child Care. Children need to be given 5 opportunities a day to practice the replacement skill – *research shows that less than 5 will not bring about change*. The team around the child need to work together and agree on the plan, and implement the strategies consistently in a variety of settings.

Keep in Mind: It is not uncommon for the behaviour to get worse before it gets better – getting worse is a signal that you are on the right track and need to persist with the strategies you are using.

What if the challenging behaviour returns?

- Gather the team together and restore the plan, ensuring that everyone is 'on the same page' and implementing the plan with fidelity – there is no use developing a new plan until you know the original plan is being implemented consistently as planned or;
- Alter the plan if necessary to address new triggers or;
- Conduct a new functional assessment and develop new support strategies

For Further information:

Book – 'Prevent, Teach, Reinforce for Young Children' by Dunlap, Wilson, Strain & Lee. Paul Brookes Publishing 2014

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