



Positive Behavior Support

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) refers to a broad approach for resolving problem behaviors that is based on person-centered values and empirically valid interventions (Carr et al., 2002). PBS is described as an evolving applied science that “uses educational methods to expand an individual’s behavior repertoire and systems change methods to redesign an individual’s quality of life and, second, to minimize his or her behavior” (Carr et al., 2002, p. 4). Research on PBS has demonstrated the effectiveness of the approach with children and adults ranging from age two until senior adulthood. Studies have included children, youth, and adults from diverse cultural groups who have a variety of risk factors, diagnoses, or disabilities (e.g., autism, mental retardation, conduct disorders, oppositional defiant disorder) (Carr et al., 1999).

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) provides an effective process for developing individualized interventions for children with severe problem behavior (Fox, Dunlap, & Cushing, 2002). PBS begins with input from a team of individuals who are concerned and knowledgeable about the child. PBS is most effective when families and teachers, and other service providers work together and implement the process across all environments. Problem behavior is viewed as having meaning or serving a purpose for the child, and this purpose is identified through a process called functional assessment. Once the function of problem behavior is identified, the team develops a behavior support plan. The behavior support plan includes: (1) specific strategies for modifying the environment, activity, curriculum, and/or interactions with the child to prevent occurrences of the problem behavior and, (2) specific procedures to teach the child a new skill to replace the problem behavior. In addition, the plan includes strategies to ensure that new skills are reinforced and learned and that problem behavior is not maintained.

Key Facts

- PBS is a highly effective intervention approach that is evidence-based
- PBS has been used to support individual children with severe problem behavior and to create program wide supports for early childhood programs and schools
- PBS involves the development of behavior support strategies that are based on an understanding of the child's problem behavior within the context of his or her relationships and daily activities
- PBS offers children, families, providers, and professionals with evidence-based intervention strategies that are positive, focused on skill development, and tailored to the needs of the individual
- PBS is focused on the achievement of meaningful lifestyle outcomes of children and families

Citations:

Carr, E. G., Horner, R. H., Turnbull, A. P., Marquis, J. G., McLaughlin, D. M., McAtee, M. L., Smith, C. E., Ryan, K. A., Ruef, M. B., Doolabh, A., & Braddock, D. (1999). *Positive behavior support as an approach for dealing with problem behavior in people with developmental disabilities: A research synthesis*. Washington, DC: AAMR.

Carr, E. G., Dunlap, G., Horner, R. H., Koegel, R. L., Turnbull, A. P., Sailor, W., Anderson, J. L., Albin, R. W., Koegel, L. K., & Fox, L. (2002). Positive behavior support: Evolution of an applied science. *Journal of Positive Behavior Intervention, 4*, 4-16.

For More Information:

Fox, L., Dunlap, G., & Cushing, L. (2002). Early intervention, positive behavior support, and transition to school. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 10*, 149-157.

Fox, L., Dunlap, G., & Powell, D. (2002). Young children with challenging behavior: Issues and consideration for behavior support. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 4*, 208-217.

Fox, L., & Little, N. (2001). Starting early: Developing school-wide behavior support in a community preschool. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 3*(4), 251-254.

Article used courtesy of Lise Fox: Co-Principal Investigator Department of Child and Family Studies, MHC 2113A, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida