Behavioral and Disciplinary Outcomes of PBIS in Texas Secure Juvenile Facilities

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Abstract

In 2009, the Texas legislature mandated a large-scale systems change in preliminary behavioral outcomes of the first semester of schoolwide PBIS implementation in the spring of 2011.

We looked at the impact of schoolwide PBIS on minor and major behavior incidents and their primary consequences (referral to security/administrative segregation, with and without an admission) at 9 male facilities and 1 female facility. We also looked at the impact at the Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU).

Highlights included: (a) an agency-wide 21% decrease in school and a 26% decrease outside school of major incidents with a security admission; (b) an agency-wide 42% decrease in school and a 31% decrease outside school of major incidents with a security referral (but no admission).

Results from the Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) were even more dramatic, with an 88% reduction from baseline in challenging behaviors over a 2-month follow-up observation period. Other CSU findings of note included a positive impact of active engagement on decreased challenging behaviors, and the maintenance of appropriate levels of behavior, even when increasing the criteria for receiving reinforcement.

Agency-Wide (9 male facilities, 1 female facility)

Major Incidents + Referral + Admission

Major Incidents + Referral, no Admission
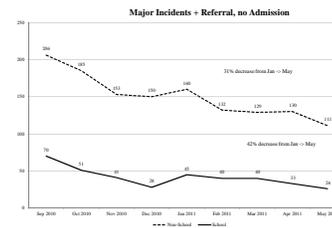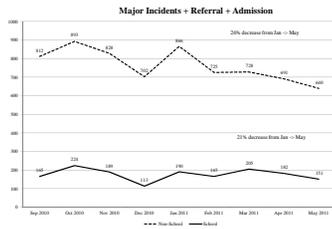
Introduction

In 2009, the Texas legislature required that the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) "adopt system-wide classroom and individual positive behavior supports that incorporate a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies." Facility Leadership Team training was conducted in the summer and fall of 2010, and implementation of schoolwide PBIS began in January 2011 in 10 secure care facilities (9 male and 1 female). One of the male facilities houses the Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU), which houses youth who are in acute psychological distress (i.e., suicidal ideation or intent). This study reports preliminary behavioral outcome data for the spring semester of 2011 for the entire agency, as well as additional data collected specifically at the CSU.
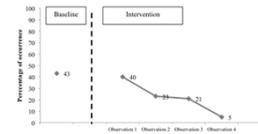
Method

Data of major and minor incidents and their consequences (i.e., referral and admission to "security"/administrative segregation) were collected for all 10 facilities (9 male and 1 female) for the 2010-2011 school year. Rates of behavioral incidents in the Spring, 2012 semester (i.e., after schoolwide PBIS implementation had begun) were compared to the rates of behavioral incidents in the Fall, 2011 semester (i.e., before schoolwide PBIS implementation had begun)

Data were also collected from the Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) to assess (1) behavioral improvement, (2) impact of instruction, and (3) student reaction to increasing criteria for reinforcers. To assess behavioral improvement, 1 baseline measure of challenging behavior was taken, and 4 observations over a 2-month period after schoolwide PBIS was begun. To assess the interaction of instruction and behavior, data were also collected after implementation of active instructional engagement strategies. Finally, to assess student reaction to increasing criteria for reinforcers, behavioral data were collected over a 14-day period. During the first 10 days, the criterion for reinforcement was set at 10 points, while the criterion was increased to 15 for the final 4 days of the period.
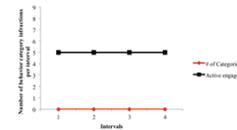
Results

- School setting
  - Agency-wide there was a 42% decrease in major incidents with a "security" (administrative segregation) referral but no admission, and a 21% decrease in major incidents with a security referral and admission.
- Non-school settings
  - Agency-wide there was a 31% decrease in major incidents with a security referral but no admission, and a 26% decrease in major incidents with a security referral and admission.
- Crisis-Stabilization Unit:
  - Over a 2-month period there was an 88% reduction from baseline in challenging behaviors.
  - Overall, youth behavior improved when teachers provided active instruction/engagement.
  - Youth met behavioral expectations in order to receive reinforcers, irrespective of the level of expectation expected. Thus, youth were adapting to improved environmental structure and contingencies.

Crisis Stabilization Unit

Method: A partial interval time-sampling procedure was used to collect data in which 9 possible categories of behavior could be noted per interval.

Results: Over approximately 2 months, there was an 88% reduction from baseline in challenging behavior.


Method: A partial interval time-sampling procedure was used to collect data in which 9 possible categories of behavior and instructional condition could be noted per interval.

Results: No inappropriate behaviors were noted during an instructional delivery condition of active engagement.

Crisis Stabilization Unit

- A cost-response reinforcement system was implemented. Students began with 20 points; points were removed for behavioral infractions, and bonus points were awarded for target behaviors. The criterion for reinforcement when the system began was > 10 points, which the students met easily. Even when the criterion was raised to > 15 points, the students maintained a high level of appropriate behavior.
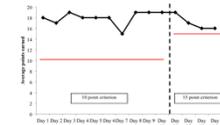
Discussion

- The impact of schoolwide PBIS on challenging behaviors (particularly major incidents which prompted a security referral) in TYC settings was felt in a relatively short period of time--the spring semester of 2011.
- The impact of schoolwide PBIS on challenging behaviors was also evident in non-school settings, despite no formal implementation outside of school. This non-school impact was more noticeable for major incidents than for minor incidents.
- There was much more variability in the non-school impact across facilities than there was for the school impact across facilities.
- The impact of PBIS was evident even for those youth in the most acute distress--those at the Crisis Stabilization Unit.
- In addition to universal techniques (explicitly teaching and reinforcing behavioral expectations) which improved challenging behaviors, active instruction and targeted level techniques (point sheets) also significantly reduced challenging behaviors at the Crisis Stabilization Unit.
- CSU results clearly demonstrated that youth were adapting to improved environmental structure and contingencies, irrespective of their mental health challenges.

References:

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