



Research Brief

Factors Affecting Community-Based Behavioral Support

Hieneman, M. & Dunlap, G. (2000). Factors affecting the outcomes of community-based behavioral support: Identification and description of factor categories. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2(3), 161-169.

Why was it conducted?

Although the technical features of positive behavioral support have been well documented in the literature, research has not typically addressed the broad array of variables that may affect behavioral support in home, school, and community environments. The purpose of this study was to identify factors, and develop preliminary factor categories, that may influence the success of behavioral support for children with severe disabilities in the community. Behavioral intervention studies have been used to evaluate the impact of specific procedures, but have not typically addressed the broad array of variables that may affect support in home, school, and community environments.

Who participated?

Fifteen participants including family members, direct service providers, and trainers/consultants were involved in the study. They all had training and extensive experience (i.e., 7-20 years) in behavioral support for individuals with severe disabilities. They were identified through the Research and Training Center on Positive Behavioral Support's state training network, and included people from 15 different states throughout the country.

How was it implemented?

This study was part of a two-phase investigation. It involved reviewing relevant literature and conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants. The literature review resulted in identification of 153 articles, chapters, and books. Participants were then interviewed using a guide designed to identify factors that contribute to the success or failure of community-based support efforts. Using the information from the literature review as a preliminary framework, the participants' responses were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to develop factor categories.

What were the results?

Participants from the different constituent groups were generally consistent in the factors they identified. Twelve factor categories were identified:

1. Characteristics of the focus individual
(e.g., medical/sensory issues, preferences, skills and abilities)
2. Nature and history of the behavior
(e.g., type, frequency, intensity, variability of the behavior, intervention history)
3. Behavioral support plan design
(e.g., adequacy of the assessment, planning, and intervention process)

4. Integrity of implementation
(i.e., degree to which intervention was used, plan monitored to evaluate effectiveness)
5. Nature of the physical environment
(e.g., setting characteristics, organization, resources, activity schedules)
6. Buy-in with the intervention
(i.e., degree to which support providers believe in, and commit to implement support plan)
7. Capacity of support providers
(i.e., skills and abilities given personal resources, circumstances, and competing priorities)
8. Relationship with the individual
(e.g., acceptance, respect, sensitivity to person)
9. Match with prevailing philosophy
(e.g., agency's/program's traditions, standards, policies, procedures)
10. Responsiveness of the system
(e.g., agency's/program's flexibility in responding to individual needs)
11. Collaboration among providers
(e.g., communication and coordinated activity among families and service providers)
12. Community acceptance
(e.g., public perceptions about people with disabilities)

What are the implications?

Study participants enumerated a broad range of factors that may have an impact on behavioral support efforts including individual support, procedural issues, the social and physical environment, and systemic concerns. Particular emphasis was placed on the support providers' commitment and capacity. Only a few of these factors have been the focus of empirical research. Therefore, a major implication is that much more attention and research should focus on those factors that have not been investigated adequately.

This study attests to the complexity of providing behavioral support within community settings, and reiterates the value of designing individualized, contextually-relevant plans. It also demonstrates the need for an expanded framework for assessment and intervention that takes ecological variables into consideration.

References

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