



Research Brief

A Case Study of Family-Centered Behavioral Support

Vaughn B.J., Dunlap, G., Fox, L., Clarke, S., & Bucy, M. (1997). Parent-professional partnership in behavioral support: A case study of community-based intervention. Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 22, 185-197.

Fox, L., Vaughn B.J., Dunlap, G., & Bucy, M. (1997). Parent-professional partnership in behavioral support: A quantitative analysis of one family's experience. Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 22, 198-207.

These two articles present complimentary perspectives of a comprehensive, community-based behavioral support process in which parents and university professionals worked together to help improve the behavior of "Jeffrey," a 9 year-old boy with severe disabilities, Cornelia de Lange Syndrome, and significant challenging behaviors. The articles describe and document the process and the outcomes of this parent-professional partnership designed to produce improved behavior in typical community environments.

The first article (Vaughn et al., 1997) describes the process in terms of the specific procedures that were implemented and the results that were obtained. Its design involved brief tests of intervention components and a time-series analysis across settings. This (quantitative assessment) is the most common perspective that is presented in journals and other professional articles. The second article (Fox et al., 1997) describes the process from the perspective of the family. The content of this article was derived from interviews with family members, an audio journal that was recorded throughout the process by Jeffrey's mother, and other reports and family observations. This family perspective offers a different, complementary view of the behavior support process, from the vital viewpoint of the participants and consumers.

The behavior support process included planning, functional assessment, and interventions conducted over a 10-month period. Interventions were implemented in three separate settings, all of which were selected by Jeffrey's mother as being problematic due to Jeffrey's behavior, but also very important for the family's regular routine. The settings were a fast food restaurant (KFC), a drive-through bank, and a supermarket. After functional assessments were conducted in each of the three settings, separate interventions were developed. Strategies included a picture schedule and preferred activities embedded within and following routines. Jeffrey's mother conducted all of the sessions, with initial coaching and support from the university consultants. Multiple measures were obtained on the occurrence of problem behaviors and participatory and cooperative responding.

The results showed great improvements in all of the settings. Problem behavior was reduced, participation increased, and the quality of parent-child interactions improved. Specific tantrums that had been associated with transitions through doorways were decreased substantially. In addition, social validation data showed that other parents (who viewed the sessions on videotape) felt that the procedures were feasible and that Jeffrey appeared to be much improved as a result of the interventions. The analysis of the family data yielded two major findings. First, the impact of the problem behavior on the family was a pervasive concern that affected virtually all aspects of family life and, second, the effects of the behavioral support process produced very important benefits from the family's perspectives. The benefits had to do with an enhancement of the relationship that family members enjoyed with Jeffrey, the development of a more positive outlook on Jeffrey's behavior, and a feeling of empowerment and satisfaction with the approach of positive behavior support.

Together, these two articles provide a detailed description of an effort to use positive behavior support in complex community settings, and to do so through a close parent-professional partnership. The articles also depict multiple perspectives on the process and outcomes, and bring the family voice to the forefront of the literature. The articles demonstrate clearly the potential of close collaborative relationships for bringing the benefits of positive behavior support to the situations where they are most needed.

Note: The publication of these two articles was accompanied by five commentaries, written by Edward G. Carr, Robert H. Horner, Ilene Schwartz, George Singer, and Martha Snell. The commentaries are followed by a response written by the authors of the two articles. These commentaries and response can be obtained from the same issue on JASH that contain the two articles (1997, Volume 22, Number 4).

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