Collaborative Teaming in PBS

Positive behavioral support involves designing interventions based on a thorough understanding of the circumstances affecting a person’s behavior and implementing those interventions within typical daily routines and environments. To achieve these ends, PBS requires open communication and coordinated effort among all individuals participating in the support process. Collaboration entails people who know and care about the focus individual sharing responsibility, resources, and a positive vision for their success.

Features of effective collaboration:
1. Mutual trust and respect
2. Shared goals and objectives
3. Open, respectful communication
4. Effective conflict resolution
5. Equity in task distribution
6. Consensus decision-making
7. Ongoing problem solving

Collaboration in positive behavioral support means that a team, made up of the individual, their family and friends, and service providers from various disciplines and environments, engage in all aspects of the support process.

Example: Joey is having behavioral difficulties on community outings (e.g., job training, trips to the grocery store). Joey, his parents, coworkers, and job coach meet to discuss their concerns and establish goals. Then (with assistance from someone with training in PBS) the team works together to gather information and identify conditions affecting Joey’s behavior. Using what they learned as a foundation, the team designs a support plan that will fit in their environments and that they feel capable of implementing. They put it in place and continue to meet periodically to monitor the progress and celebrate their success.

Nonexample: Joey is having behavioral difficulties on community outings. The supported employment agency contracts with an outside expert to complete a functional behavioral assessment and develop a program. The consultant observes Joey in the community, administers a rating scale with his job coach, and then writes up a report with recommendations. The consultant presents the plan to the ‘team,’ tells them what to do and how to take data, and fields questions as needed. Joey’s support providers have not had input into the assessment or intervention, but are expected to implement the strategies.

Effective collaboration requires that systems (e.g., agencies) be organized so that they support creative, cooperative activities, rather than embracing hierarchical structures in which individuals with disabili-
ties, family members, and direct service providers are undervalued. Collaboration often involves over-
coming attitudinal barriers and extending participation in team activities beyond typical parameters.

Frequently-Asked Questions

1. **Collaboration is fine in theory, but realistically it is extremely time-consuming. How many more
   meetings can a person take?** Collaboration does not necessarily mean meetings; it requires finding a
   forum for open communication and working together. However, it is true that collaboration requires
   time. The challenge is to use time effectively and efficiently. If a good deal of time is currently being
   spent managing crises, attempting ineffective strategies, or addressing conflict among team members,
   that time would be better channeled into more productive, collaborative activities.

2. **What do you do when some of the team members refuse to collaborate, or even react with resistance
   or hostility?** PBS teaches us that people behave in certain ways for a reason. If members of the team are
   responding in ways that affect the collaborative effort, it would be important to investigate why (e.g.,
   When do they behave that way? How do people respond?). It may be that they are being left out of
   discussions or are not committed to the outcomes identified by the rest of the team (or a host of other
   issues). With understanding, it may be possible to draw them back into the process and support more
   positive interaction.

Other Resources

support for two boys with severe disabilities. In J.R. Scotti & L.H. Meyer (Eds.), Behavioral intervention:
Principles, models, and practices (pp.363-384). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes

Turnbull, A.P. & Turnbull, H.R. (1996). Group action planning as a strategy for providing comprehensive
family support. In L.K. Koegel, R.L. Koegel, & G. Dunlap (Eds.) Positive behavioral support: Including people
with difficult behavior in the community (pp. 99-114). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.