



ASSOCIATION FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

# Newsletter

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Association for  
Positive Behavior  
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## Judy Favell to Deliver Keynote Address at 2005 APBS International Conference on Positive Behavior Support

Dr. Judy Favell, executive director of Advoserv and a past president of the Association for Behavior Analysis, will deliver the keynote address at the 2005 APBS International Conference in Tampa, Florida. Dr. Favell is widely respected for her many contributions as a researcher, innovator, clinician, and administrator in the field of developmental disabilities, as well as for her skill in translating cutting-edge science into evidence-based practice. Her talk will reflect her experiences in making intervention a success within the complex world of community care systems and address the necessity for combining the best of applied behavior analysis with positive behavior support to expand the impact of what we do.

## 2005 APBS Conference

Tampa, Florida  
March 10–12, 2005

### Registration

The registration form is available online. Please see the  
APBS Web site ([www.apbs.org](http://www.apbs.org)) for the form.

*Editor's Note: In this and the next issue of our newsletter, we will provide a description of technology applications and their support of PBS practices. Submissions of follow-up articles and comments are encouraged.*

## Using Information Technology to Enhance the Effectiveness of Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions

*David L. Westling and Stephen Westling*

Information technology (IT) is broadly defined as the application of computer and communications systems to acquire, store, communicate, and analyze data. Today, IT tools are being applied to data from fields as diverse as business, genetics, telecommunications, meteorology, and risk management. In this article, we discuss the use of *Positive Solutions*, a Web-based software package designed to apply IT to help improve challenging behavior. In addition, we address the benefits of using this system versus traditional methods and the type of database research procedures that could lead to knowledge that would benefit the field of positive behavior supports (PBS).

*Positive Solutions* ([www.positive-solutions.net](http://www.positive-solutions.net)) provides a toolkit of instruments at its Web site for addressing serious behavior problems of individuals. The software is intended to (a) facilitate the collection, storage, sharing, retrieval, and analysis of relevant individual and functional assessment data; (b) increase the opportunity for collaborative support program planning, implementation, and monitoring; and (c) provide automated record keeping and reporting. Also, because the program allows users to work on structured documents through the Internet, it helps reduce paperwork and the amount of meeting time and travel time for professionals who are working together on the same case.

*Positive Solutions* uses a folder/document paradigm. A folder contains information stored in separate documents about a single individual with a challenging behavior, the target person. Users of the software who are authorized by their agency to work on a specific folder may enter and share information or open and read information entered by another user authorized to work on the same folder. In the system, individuals working on the same folder are referred to as collaborators. The target person remains anonymous within the system and is known to folder collaborators only by an alphanumeric code. Because the program is Web-based and requires only a computer and a Web browser, one collaborator can access the system at any time and create or edit a document while another collaborator may open the folder and immediately read documents that were created by the other collaborators. Also, because the program is Web-based, a user may enter, edit, and save data at any time. Because the work is done through the Internet, collaboration is not restricted by geography, allowing distant users to serve as collaborators.

The folder may contain an unlimited number of documents that are created and/or read by the folder's collaborators,

who also are not limited to a certain number. The software's eight structured documents are

- ❶ individual profile,
- ❷ indirect functional assessment,
- ❸ indirect assessment short form,
- ❹ direct functional assessment,
- ❺ continuous measures,
- ❻ medical history,
- ❼ support plan, and
- ❽ team task list.

An unlimited number of the first four of these documents may be contained within a folder, but only one each of the last four may be actively used in a folder at a given time. Each document allows an extensive amount of data to be entered using either a point-and-click selection or free form narrative.

Generally, certain collaborators, such as teachers and parents, will create and enter information into some documents (such as the individual profile, the indirect functional assessment or the indirect assessment short form, and the continuous measures document), while other collaborators, such as behavioral consultants, will create different documents (such as the direct assessment, which requires live observation, the medical history, and the task list). With these documents all residing in the same folder and with all collaborators having access to read each of them, the final step is for a consultant/team leader to create the support plan document. Although created by one person, this document contains space in a "worksheet" area for all collaborators to input ideas for the plan (such as prevention tactics and replacement behaviors); the consultant or leader who created the support plan document will then formulate a single, "official" support plan for all to follow.

Besides facilitating the work and collaboration of practitioners, a significant advantage of using *Positive Solutions* is that data are stored in a relational database. This permits various activities and analyses that are not possible through traditional processes. For example, the use of *Positive Solutions* provides the following advantages:

- An individual's data can be safely and securely stored for an indefinite period of time without the use of enormous paper filing systems, and these data can be accessed immediately by authorized users at any time.
- The program can compare and contrast different documents within a folder, allowing instant assessments across time or collaborators.
- Agency administrators may be sent specialized reports in electronic format that contain information such as the number and types of challenging behaviors within their agency, professionals assigned to specific folders, whether a support plan has been developed, and whether behavior change data are being recorded.
- Individuals can search the database using key terms to find anonymous cases that are similar to their own and then examine the plans that were developed and the level of success achieved with them. The program also lets users create user profiles that allow them to indicate the language they wish the program to be in. The Web site interface thus can be linguistically compatible with the user.

*Positive Solutions* provides an important service to persons exhibiting challenging behaviors, their parents and families, and the professionals who work with them. But the software also offers an opportunity to learn and share much more about the nature of challenging behavior than we have been able to do in the past. Currently, all accessible data on challenging behaviors exist in case studies in which one or a few individuals are studied. In these studies, the individuals' behavior and associated variables are presented, along with the interventions that were used and the effect of those interventions. Although these cases provide very useful information, we are limited in drawing broad conclusions about populations and interventions by combining the studies and analyzing their results, such as was done by Carr et al. (1999). Information technology, combined with different types of data analyses, allows us to do much more, much more quickly, and at very little cost.

Modern databases can easily store vast amounts of data for an indeterminate period of time, and sophisticated analytical tools and techniques permit investigators to more easily discover useful knowledge in the datasets. Advances in techniques such as artificial intelligence and machine learning offer the

potential for a rich set of tools to probe and develop a deeper understanding of the relationships among individual personal variables, past and current environmental factors,



and atypical behavior. Ultimately, these analyses may lead to a greater understanding of predictive and causal relationships. Using such analytical procedures within an extensive database, it would be possible to study both hypothesized and unknown relations among an extensive array of variables.

PBS provides a research-based approach to address challenging behaviors in ways that can be meaningful, nonaversive, and usually effective. Central to the success of PBS, though, is the extent that it can be used with a high degree of fidelity in applied settings. This requires that individuals be adequately trained and that systematic operational procedures be in place to conduct assessments, analyze data, form hypotheses, develop plans, implement plans, and monitor their effectiveness. A software system such as *Positive Solutions*, which offers a user-friendly and accessible data collection, storing system, and sharing system, assists in achieving these conditions. In addition, as suggested, relational databases created by this type of software can contribute tremendously to our understanding of behavior through various data analyses procedures. Theoretically, at least, there now is a much greater potential to apply the effective principles of PBS more broadly and also learn more about the nature of challenging behaviors that make these principles necessary.

### Reference

- Carr, E. G., Horner, R. H., Turnbull, A. P., Marquis, J. G., McLaughlin, D. M., McAtee, M. L., et al. (1999). *Positive behavior support for people with developmental disabilities: A research synthesis*. Washington, DC: American Association on Mental Retardation.

## APBS: A Time to Expand Board Membership

APBS currently has eight members on its Board of Directors, with four of these eight members serving on the Executive Committee. Terms for seats on the Board of Directors run 3 years. Nominations are being solicited from the APBS membership for four open seats on the Board. Any member of APBS who is in good standing may nominate someone and/or serve on the Executive Board. Nominations are made by submitting the following items:

- (a) the Nomination Application for APBS Executive Board of Directors form,

- (b) a letter or e-mail from the individual being nominated (if not self-nominated),  
 (c) a professional vita or personal description of the qualifications of the individual being nominated, and  
 (d) a nomination paragraph of no more than 250 words that will be submitted to the membership for the final vote.

All nominations (including all required information noted above) must be received by

**October 20, 2004.**

Nominations received after this date will be considered invalid. The nomination form can be downloaded from the APBS Web site ([www.apbs.org](http://www.apbs.org)).

### APBS Newsletter

We want you to contribute to the *APBS Newsletter*. We would like the newsletter to be a mechanism for sharing thoughtful perspectives related to PBS. Please consider the submission of the following:

- Innovative Applications
- Member Perspectives
- Success Stories
- Resources and Materials
- Training Events & Workshops

If you would like to submit to the newsletter, please contact the editor,  
**Lise Fox**, PhD, 813/974-6100 or [fox@fmbi.usf.edu](mailto:fox@fmbi.usf.edu).



## Announcing . . .



### *The Second International Conference on* **Positive Behavior Support** March 10–12, 2005

**The Expanding World of PBS: Science, Values, & Vision**

#### **For more information contact:**

Tim Knoster at 570-389-4081  
[tknoster@bloomu.edu](mailto:tknoster@bloomu.edu)  
<http://www.apbs.org>



Sponsored By: The Association for Positive Behavior Support and The OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) with co-sponsorship from the OSEP Center on Evidence-based Practice: Young Children with Challenging Behavior.



### **Marriott Waterside** **Tampa, Florida**

- ✓ Featuring over 50 exciting presentations on methods, aspects, issues and research in Positive Behavior Support.
- ✓ Will include skill-building workshops on school-wide positive behavior support, measuring outcomes, applications in schools, early intervention, among other topics.