



**Association of Positive Behavior Support (APBS)  
Commitment to Equity**

***Positive behavior support is rooted in a history of disability rights.***

The field of positive behavior support was established in the United States of America during the mid-1980s as an alternative to institutionalization and overreliance on aversive interventions for individuals with disabilities. Over the years, positive behavior support has spread around the globe and grown in reach (individuals, schools, families, communities, and agencies). The original hallmarks of positive behavior support are values-based and person-centered perspectives through (a) the functional (communicative) nature of behavior, (b) building adaptive behaviors, and (c) data-based decision-making regarding implementation fidelity and outcomes, while honoring the uniqueness and dignity of each individual. From its inception, the intent of positive behavior support was to create positive, successful, and nurturing conditions through creating caring conditions for inclusion and quality of life<sup>1</sup>.

***The Association of Positive Behavior Support recognizes that, if not implemented with intentionality and values-based and person-centered perspectives, practices and frameworks can perpetuate harm.***

Recently, there have been efforts to incorporate the founding elements of value-based, person-centered foci across the broad range of implementation in the field, and to elevate the focus on racial justice and broader implications of equity<sup>2</sup>. It is important for The Association to acknowledge the need for improvement in our mission, goals, and practice. As an organization, we recognize the role power, control, and privilege play in the perpetuation of harm against oppressed individuals, including, but not limited to, individuals with disabilities, communities of color, Indigenous peoples and First Nations, gender identification, sexual orientation, refugees, migrants, and underserved populations. Any organization, system, framework, or practice can be influenced by power and result in the oppression of historically and currently marginalized, minoritized, and vulnerable populations. The implementation of practices and frameworks such as positive behavior support can perpetuate such systems of power, control and privilege.

***The Association of Positive Behavior Support commits to being a steward for centering equity within our organization and with positive behavior support.***

Stewards of positive behavior support need to be especially careful to prioritize the strengths, interests, and values of the individual over the comfort or convenience of a system. To reduce systemic inequities and assertions of control over the people we support, we must be focused on our intended purpose of social and individual responsibility. The voices of those we are championing will be at the heart of our actions. We will seek to give authentic representation and voice to each individual. APBS explicitly confirms our commitment to equity. APBS commits to action steps that leverage positive behavior support to ensure that equitable systems, practices, and

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experiences result in equal and meaningful outcomes for each individual.

**Action Steps: Organization, Home and Family, Community, and School  
Leveraging Positive Behavior Support to Promote Equitable Experiences and  
Meaningful Positive Outcomes for Each Individual**

**APBS Organization Action Steps** To develop the structures and operations of APBS, action steps will address changes to systems, practices, and data.

- Include language of equity, diversity, and inclusion within policy statements including the mission statement,
- Generate and disseminate an equity statement for the organization,
- Dedicate a working committee of those with lived experiences focused on elevating and integrating the priority for equity, human rights, and social justice throughout the organization,
- Develop and disseminate equity focused professional learning opportunities to support APBS members and others involved with positive behavior support, and
- Dedicate a conference strand to topics specially addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion including critical discourse through positive behavior support.

Outcomes	Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board Membership representative of our diverse society</li> <li>• Representative organization leadership</li> <li>• Representative APBS membership</li> <li>• Inclusive, thoughtful, communication, practices evaluated for explicit and implicit biases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align supports to reflect the values of the individual across home, school, community, mental health, and equity</li> <li>• Invest in transparent, clearly executed systems and procedures (e.g., leadership voting, areas of focus)</li> </ul>
Data	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, collect, and review data on membership demographics</li> <li>• Review stakeholder feedback around representation, diversity of content and trainings provided</li> <li>• Engage in analyses of data to improve equitable content, practices, inclusive leadership, membership, and reach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with stakeholders to communicate commitment to equity, inclusion, safety, belonging, and representation</li> <li>• Provide training and safe spaces to engage in critical conversations, conference material, website, and social media practices and information that are inclusive, up to date, equitably communicated across stakeholder groups to include international, underrepresented, and groups of members needing accommodations</li> </ul>

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**Home and Family Action Steps:** Home and family action steps are centered on promoting the individual's and family's leadership in defining and accessing positive behavior supports across support systems (e.g., mental health/MH, housing, community resources) and streamlining the access across providers.

Outcomes	Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect family and individual's core values and beliefs, life goals and dreams, current support system as well as potential resources and partnerships that reflect the family's needs in the person-centered process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support conversations with families so that they can share their core values and beliefs, life goals and dreams, and current supports.</li> <li>• Align supports across environments and systems to reduce duplication of service and enhance collaboration. (e.g., ability to access MH, community resources, housing and financial in one location at one time).</li> <li>• Invest in coaching, training and advocacy support to assure values, beliefs and cultures are respected and collaboration and partnerships are honored.</li> <li>• Engage in a team-driven process where families are perceived and engaged as equal partners and the process reflects and considers their unique family structure (e.g., 2 parent, single parent, same sex, multi-generational) as well as their cultural values and beliefs.</li> </ul>
Data	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and engage in data-based decision making at a community level and with the people being supported.</li> <li>• Engage in the purposeful use of disaggregated data-based decision making.</li> <li>• Consider family perceptions as a source of data.</li> <li>• Include community data to support the understanding of how</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with families prior to formal meetings to discuss participants, agenda, outcomes and decisions to be made.</li> <li>• Offer training for families on advocacy and collaboration to increase their ability to participate and collaborate.</li> <li>• Provide families with access to all resources and support in a meaningful way so they can be active partners (e.g., access to technology, language</li> </ul>

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<p>people equitably access and utilize supports.</p>	<p>preferences, ability to read and understand written material, interpretation).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce barriers to access for families engaging with APBS.</li> </ul>
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**Community Action Steps:** Community action steps are centered on the individual and their opportunities to live in areas that are important (e.g., home communities, employment, education, health) and creating a person-centered process within a positive behavior support framework across tiers of support.

Outcomes	Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in a team-driven process to identify valued outcomes. This can occur at the country, region, state, county, and/or provider level.</li> <li>• Include a range of value outcomes in individual, organization-wide, and state/region/country-wide evaluation plans. Examples include: employment, health, community living, quality of life.</li> <li>• Include outcomes on organizational health and diversity within the workforce in country, region, state, and organization-wide plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create teams to support organization-wide plans and individualized plans for people supported.</li> <li>• Provide leadership and decision-making authority to people who have been left out, including but not limited to: oppressed individuals, including individuals with disabilities, communities of color, refugees, migrants, and underserved populations.</li> <li>• Invest in training and coaching needs of staff at the country, region, state, county, and/or provider level.</li> <li>• Expand the diversity of staff using community mapping to make sure there is an alignment matching complementary and/or similar demographics, cultural backgrounds, and temperament of people providing direct support with the people they support.</li> </ul>
Data	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and engage in data-based decision making at a community level and with the people being supported.</li> <li>• Engage in the purposeful use of disaggregated data-based decision making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop organization-wide and individual plans through a person-centered lens and develop plans with the person being supported and provide mechanisms for end user voice to be expressed and received.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include community data to support the understanding of how people equitably access and utilize supports.</li> </ul>	
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**School Action Steps:** School-based action steps are centered on creating inclusive learning environments for each individual, where students and families are actively included in planning and decision making across tiers of support, and students are linked to resources/supports based on student need. The Center on PBIS provides a field guide to support an [equitable PBIS framework](#)<sup>3</sup> and [enhancing equity in school discipline](#)<sup>4</sup>.

Outcomes	Systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify a range of valued outcomes including, but not limited to, school climate (safety, belonging, inclusion), academic achievement, discipline (suspension, office discipline referral, out of class time), community data, mental health</li> <li>• Involve school, family, and community partners in identifying valued outcomes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize data-based decision making as a focus for team meetings.</li> <li>• Actively involve students with lived experiences and families, that represent the diversity within the school community, in the planning of, adjustments for, and data-based problem solving within a multi-tiered framework.</li> <li>• Include emphasis on the <a href="#">integration of mental health and social emotional behavior</a><sup>5</sup> promotion across tiers of support.</li> <li>• Support teachers in having <a href="#">conversation about racism</a><sup>6</sup>, ableism, and other forms of bias with students.</li> </ul>
Data	Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in the purposeful use of <a href="#">disaggregated data-based decision making</a><sup>7</sup> to inform equitable action planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively involve students and families in the development of Tier 1 practices.</li> <li>• Focus on high-leverage <a href="#">classroom practices</a><sup>8</sup> (e.g., behavior specific praise, opportunities to respond).</li> <li>• <a href="#">Collaborate with families</a><sup>9</sup></li> </ul>

**References and Resources:**

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We recognize this work is in its early stages and that the origins of the work to reduce bias and discrimination related to positive behavior support are rooted in the long-term and deeply appreciated efforts from brilliant colleagues whose work is the thread from which current positive behavioral practices were woven.

1. Kincaid, D., Dunlap, G., Kern, L., Lane, K., Bambara, Brown, F., Fox, L., & Knoster, T. (2016). Positive behavior support: A proposal for updating and refining the definition. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 18, 69-73.
2. McDaniel, S., Cohen, D., LaSalle, T., Nese, R. (2021). Not separate but not equal: Improving equity in discipline in racially and ethnically diverse school settings. *Beyond Behavior*, 30, 157-168.
3. PBIS Culturally Responsiveness Field Guide: [https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/6062383b3f8932b212e9c98b\\_PBIS%20Cultural%20Responsiveness%20Field%20Guide%20v2.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/6062383b3f8932b212e9c98b_PBIS%20Cultural%20Responsiveness%20Field%20Guide%20v2.pdf)
4. A 5-Point Intervention Approach for Enhancing Equity in School Discipline: [https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/5d9dfe3274806826f66dc624\\_A%205-Point%20Intervention%20%20Approach%20for%20Enhancing%20%20Equity%20in%20School%20Discipline.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/5d9dfe3274806826f66dc624_A%205-Point%20Intervention%20%20Approach%20for%20Enhancing%20%20Equity%20in%20School%20Discipline.pdf)
5. Integrated Tiered Fidelity Inventory Companion Guide: [https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/603d2596353a8209608bffa7\\_Integrated%20TFI%20Companion%20Guide%201.22.21%20\(Final\).pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/603d2596353a8209608bffa7_Integrated%20TFI%20Companion%20Guide%201.22.21%20(Final).pdf)
6. Discussing Race, Racism, and Important Current Events with Students: A Guide with Lesson Plans and Resources: [https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/60fee88d68b2bb5d77de4d2b\\_Discussing%20Race%2C%20Racism%2C%20and%20Important%20Current%20Events%20with%20Students.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/60fee88d68b2bb5d77de4d2b_Discussing%20Race%2C%20Racism%2C%20and%20Important%20Current%20Events%20with%20Students.pdf)
7. Using Discipline Data within SWPBIS to Identify and Address Disproportionality: A Guide for School Teams: [https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/5d71988c7d90db7045afd4cc\\_pbis\\_disproportionality\\_data\\_guidebook.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/5d71988c7d90db7045afd4cc_pbis_disproportionality_data_guidebook.pdf)
8. Supporting and Responding to Students' Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs: Evidence-Based Practices for Educators: [https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/61d491718427fb77f9a8c878\\_Supporting\\_and\\_Responding\\_to\\_Students'\\_Social.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/61d491718427fb77f9a8c878_Supporting_and_Responding_to_Students'_Social.pdf)

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9. Enhancing Family-School Collaboration with Diverse Families: [https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/60d37e1c2d5624e177b86a56\\_Enhancing%20Family%E2%80%93School%20Collaboration%20with%20Diverse%20Families.pdf](https://assets-global.website-files.com/5d3725188825e071f1670246/60d37e1c2d5624e177b86a56_Enhancing%20Family%E2%80%93School%20Collaboration%20with%20Diverse%20Families.pdf)