

## **Finding a Positive Behavior Support Facilitator**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this resource is to provide helpful tips on how to find a professional to facilitate a positive behavior support plan for a person who engages in behavior that is causing health and safety issues or has become a barrier to quality of life and inclusion.

### **Behavior Support in Kansas**

The Kansas Institute for Positive Behavior Support provides a year-long training program to teach professionals how to implement positive behavior support and person-centered planning. There will soon be professionals in your area who have gone through training at the Kansas Institute for Positive Behavior Support (KIPBS). These professionals will be called KIPBS Facilitators and can help lead teams who are interested in learning how to implement positive behavior support. The list of KIPBS Facilitators is currently small; however, a larger number of professionals across Kansas will be available as the training continues.

There are also a number of other professionals in Kansas providing services for children and adults who engage in problem behavior. These services can vary considerably in behavioral orientation, waiting lists, costs, and intensity of support. A number of professionals have specialized training in areas such as autism, assistive technology, and applied behavior analysis (for applied behavior analysts in your area, go to <http://www.bacb.com> and look at the registry). Before choosing a professional to help your organization work effectively with individuals who engage in problem behavior, it is important to consider what types of support you are looking for and the kinds of technical assistance that will be the best fit.

### **What Types of Behavioral Support Activities Are Available?**

There are a number of activities that behavior support specialists can provide. To be effective, however, most of these activities involve a team approach. The person you choose to facilitate a team-based approach should be able to assist with the following types of strategies.

Defining the Problem Using Functional Behavioral Assessment. When a person engages in problem behavior and all the strategies that have been tried are ineffective, it is possible that the reasons for the person's difficulties have not yet been clearly identified. A behavior support facilitator can help the team define the problems encountered in a clear and useful manner. One way to assess problem behavior is to conduct a functional behavioral assessment. A functional behavioral assessment is a process for understanding the reasons why an individual engages in problem behavior and the environmental events and settings associated with the occurrence and nonoccurrence of problem behavior.

Facilitate Team Based Problem Solving. Once a functional behavioral assessment is complete, the facilitator you are working with will be able to guide your team in a brainstorming session to identify intervention strategies based on the information

gathered. These interventions become part of a positive behavior support plan. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) refers to a set of research-based strategies that are intended to increase quality of life and decrease problem behaviors by designing effective environments and teaching individuals appropriate social and communication skills. A team-based process is used to design and implement positive behavior support strategies in order to ensure the plans chosen are a good fit for the people who will be implementing the interventions.

Person-Centered Planning. The purpose of a positive behavior support plan is to increase quality of life and reduce problem behaviors. Person-centered planning makes a critical contribution to positive behavior support. Person-centered planning (PCP) is a process for learning about an individual's preferred lifestyle. It involves creating goals that will assist individuals in achieving their preferred lifestyle within a collaborative team context. By focusing first on effective person-centered plans, you can decrease the need for more highly complex and time consuming PBS plans.

Provide Direct, Hands-On Training and Support. Sometimes team members may not feel comfortable implementing new interventions without additional support and training. A behavior support facilitator may spend time providing modeling, coaching, and mentoring to members of a person's team. This type of technical assistance can make the difference between an effective and ineffective PBS plan.

Development of Capacity-Building Strategies. Organizations that use resources strategically have learned to work with facilitators to strengthen their overall behavioral support systems. Using behavioral support facilitators who actively teach the teams they work with learn how to carry out a functional assessment and PBS plan independently means that the amount of time necessary from outside experts can be decreased significantly. Asking facilitators to develop training materials that can be used in similar situations in the future is one way to take advantage of outside expertise in a way that builds an organization's capacity.

### **What Can You Expect When Working with a PBS Facilitator?**

There are a number of assumptions that people have about behavioral support that can create a barrier to significant change. Teams that have implemented PBS plans effectively have the following assumptions:

Investing time in planning and prevention saves time later. It is common to hear people say that they do not have time to implement a functional behavioral assessment or PBS plan because they are too busy. Often, one of the primary reasons these professionals are busy is because they are spending a lot of time responding to problem behavior. Investing in assessment and strategic planning is essential for creating settings that prevent problem behavior from occurring at all. By putting time and energy into the PBS planning process, the team can reduce stress and increase the health, safety, and well-being of everyone in the environment.

A PBS plan requires everyone within a team to make changes. A common assumption is that the PBS plan contains plans that will require the person engaging in problem behavior to change. Instead, a PBS plan provides a blueprint for the people supporting the person engaging in problem behavior to redesign the environment in such a way that problem behaviors are minimized. The PBS plan includes how to teach the person new social and communication skills and how to cope with situations that are stressful. As a result, the PBS plan can be seen as a guide for the whole team describing how each member of the social network will change their behavior.

PBS Facilitators are not providing “the answer” to all of the problems. It is common to see an outside expert as having all the solutions to the problems being experienced. In many cases, team members may feel that this person has come to fix the problem. It is really important for team members to understand that they are the ones who have the answers to the problems. An outside facilitator can provide guidance and suggest different possibilities but the people within the person’s social network have the answers that will create a successful PBS plan.

### **Things to Think About Before Choosing a PBS Facilitator**

It is important to gather information and ask questions before selecting a PBS Facilitator to work with your organization. Choosing a facilitator who fits the particular needs of an individual and his or her team can be accomplished by asking the following questions.

Identify exactly what types of support are needed. Does the person you work with have special or unique qualities? Some behavioral support facilitators specialize in supporting individuals with mobility issues, different levels of ability, or hearing and visual problems. Ask the PBS Facilitator you work with if they have experience working with individuals with similar characteristics. Some PBS Facilitators have such a wide level of experience providing PBS support that this will not be an issue.

Are there specific time limitations for team members? Your team may need to schedule meetings at certain times that work for parents, the individual, or other people participating in the meetings. In addition, on-site support and training may be needed in the evenings or on weekends. Asking the PBS Facilitator about his or her availability may be useful.

Is your team already highly experienced or is this the first time they will be introduced to the PBS process? Assessing the knowledge and comfort level of the team who will be working with the PBS Facilitator can help you ask for the right types of assistance. A team that is new to PBS may benefit from an introductory meeting where the PBS Facilitator spends time describing background information about what the team will be doing. However, in some cases, the team has already been implementing PBS and just needs some expert guidance on a complicated case. In other situations, your agency may have a behavior support specialist with a background in applied behavior analysis or PBS. Discussing these issues ahead of time will help you and the PBS Facilitator use resources strategically to support both the person for whom the plan is being designed and his or her team members as well.

Ask for examples of past functional behavioral assessment and PBS plans. The PBS Facilitator you work with should have examples of past work available with all of the identifying information removed. You do not necessarily need to be an expert to review a past PBS plan. Instead, look at the plan and evaluate whether the way in which it is written is a good fit for your team. Does the example plan include enough information for a team like yours to implement the interventions? Is there information about how training was implemented? Did the PBS Facilitator include a functional behavioral assessment that clearly identifies the reason why the problem behavior occurred and documents the data confirming the hypothesis? Is there a summary of data collected to evaluate the PBS plan?

Ask what services the PBS Facilitator will provide and whether there are fees for this service. A Kansas Institute for Positive Behavior Support Facilitator receives reimbursement for implementing both person-centered planning and positive behavior support. Therefore, there are no fees associated with this professional's assistance. However, there are many other excellent behavior support specialists in the state of Kansas. These individuals may charge a fee for their work facilitating a PBS plan.

Make sure the professional you are considering believes in a team-based approach. The following are important activities associated with the PBS process. Use the checklist provided here to make sure the behavioral support you choose includes these key features:

- Information about how a team-based approach will be used
- Process for defining the problem using functional behavioral assessment in all relevant environments
- A person-centered plan is held with people attending selected by the person who is receiving support and his or her family
- A team reviews the functional behavioral assessment and selects interventions that fit the team's values and will be implemented across settings
- The team receives the support and technical assistance needed to implement interventions that are selected
- Regular monitoring and support is built into team meetings
- The team works with the behavioral support facilitator to make sure the plans created will be successful over time

This document is based upon a manual created by professionals at the University of Oregon for their state behavior consultants (1995).