Presentation Summary for

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR:
PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

JANUARY 16, 2015

Guest speaker Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter joined us to discuss challenging behaviors for young children who also have disabilities.

One goal of the presentation was to make clear that children who exhibit challenging behaviors do not necessarily have disabilities. And, conversely, that not all children with disabilities have challenging behaviors.

Why do children engage in challenging behaviors? There’s usually a message they are trying to communicate.

Challenging behavior can often be addressed through prevention strategies. For children with disabilities who have challenging behavior, the process is the same as for all children, but the strategies might differ depending on children’s Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and their specific needs and strengths. The following strategies can be individualized as needed.

Classroom schedules and routines:

- Have consistent schedules and routines
- Make sure the content and length of activities are developmentally appropriate
- Be intentional about using visuals to teach routines
- Give consistent feedback
- Provide more individualized support for children with disabilities who have challenging behavior during routines. They may need an individualized visual schedule or a peer buddy, for example.

Transitions:

- Try to minimize the number of transitions
- Teach expectations
- Model or provide visual examples of appropriate things to do while waiting (counting, singing a group song, playing Simon Says)
- Allow children to transition at separate times or in smaller groups as needed
### Large group activities:

- Consider the length of the activity (especially circle time). Is it age appropriate?
- For children who are working on expanding their attention, shorten wait times and allow breaks.
- Use visuals to make rules clear and to break tasks into smaller steps
- Provide ongoing feedback to expand children’s understanding, participation, and learning

### Types of support:

#### Visuals
- To help children communicate their needs
- To break down tasks
- To clarify expectations

#### Timer
- To provide a safety signal so children know when something is coming to an end

#### Adult support
- To facilitate large group and small group activities
- To model and provide examples, and help children who need more intensive support
- To provide choices

#### Peer support
- To model, think-pair-share, or be a buddy

#### Child preferences
- To increase children’s motivation and engagement in tasks that can trigger challenging behavior

### RESOURCES

- Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning on ECLKC
- Inventory of Practices for Promoting Children’s Social and Emotional Competence
- Classroom Visuals and Supports
- Facts about Young Children with Challenging Behaviors
- Tips and Ideas for Making Visuals to Support Young Children with Challenging Behavior
- Well Organized Classrooms: Behavior Guidance 15-minute In-service Suites
- Curriculum Modifications 15-minute In-service Suites

For more information, contact us at: NCQTL@UW.EDU or 877-731-0764

This document was prepared under Grant #90HC0002 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, by the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning.
Presentation Summary for

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR:
SUPPORT PLANS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

FEBRUARY 20, 2015

Guest speaker Dr. Mary Louise Hemmeter discussed support plans for children with disabilities who also have challenging behaviors.

When is it time for a behavior support plan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenging behavior is defined as any repeated pattern of behavior that interferes with learning or engagement in positive social interactions with peers and adults.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When the behavior still persists after:</td>
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<td>• Prevention strategies are already in place.</td>
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<td>• Individualized support strategies have been tried.</td>
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<td>It’s not the behavior that signals the need for a support plan; it’s the pattern of the behavior. Look at the following characteristics to help a teacher determine if a support plan is needed:</td>
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<td>• Frequency—how often it occurs</td>
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<td>• Intensity—how disruptive it is</td>
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<td>• Duration—how long it persists</td>
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What’s the first step in developing a behavior support plan?

| The first step is to understand the function of the behavior. Children often use challenging behavior as a way to communicate. Sometimes children have learned that challenging behavior results in their needs being met. Find out what the function of the behavior is by conducting a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)—A systematic examination of the function of the behavior. |
| An FBA requires someone to observe the behavior. This is a good opportunity for a disabilities coordinator to provide support by doing the observation. Observations can be done more than once and at different times of the day. Consult with the teacher about the best time to conduct an observation. |
What are the next steps in developing a support plan?

**Behavior Hypothesis**—Your best guess about why the behavior occurs, based on the FBA

- This is based on family input as well as input from all the professionals involved

**Prevention Strategies**—Ways to make events and interactions that trigger challenging behavior easier for the child to manage

- It’s more effective, and easier in the long run, to be proactive instead of reactive.

**Replacement Skills**—New skills, taught throughout the day, to replace the challenging behavior and result in the same outcome the child is aiming for. Choose a replacement skill that the child is developmentally capable of, rather than introducing a difficult or new skill.

- Teach this skill when the child (and others involved) are calm, rather than in the midst of challenging behavior when the child is distressed.

**Responses**—What adults will do, when the challenging behavior occurs, to help the child stop the challenging behavior and learn to use the new replacement skill.

How can I, as a disabilities coordinator, best support teachers when they are implementing a behavior support plan?

- *Teacher says “But I tried everything!”*
  
  Help the teacher determine if every part of the plan was implemented together.

- *The behavior gets worse right after starting the plan.*
  
  Support teachers through this inevitable spike in problem behavior. It occurs out of children’s frustration when they’re not getting the outcomes they were used to with the challenging behavior.

- *The plan still isn’t working.*
  
  Ensure that the teacher has the support needed to consistently implement the whole plan, exactly as it was written and agreed upon.

What about more severe behaviors?

Self-injurious • Danger to others • Distraction to class

*The brief answer:* If there is restraint involved, it should be addressed according to the safety net procedures that your center has in place. It is critical that this be *paired* with a behavior support plan so that the child is learning a replacement behavior that is not disruptive to learning.

RESOURCES

- Individualized Intensive Intervention: Developing a Behavior Support Plan
- Positive Behavior Support: An Individualized Approach for Addressing Challenging Behavior
- Facilitating Individualized Interventions to Address Challenging Behavior Toolkit

For more information, contact us at: **NCQTL@UW.EDU** or **877-731-0764**

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