



## Individualized Positive Behavior Support

Positive behavior support (PBS) involves the changing situations and events that people with problem behaviors experience in order to reduce the likelihood that problem behaviors will occur and increase social, personal, and professional quality in their lives. It is an approach that blends values about the rights of people with disabilities with a practical science about how learning and behavior change occur (Association for Positive Behavior Support, 2008).

The goal of Individualized Positive Behavior Support is to reduce problem behavior and increase an individual's daily living skills and opportunities for an enhanced quality of life. Research demonstrates the effectiveness of PBS in addressing behaviors that are dangerous, highly disruptive, and/or impede learning and often result in social or educational exclusion. PBS is used to support positive behavior changes of individuals with developmental disabilities, autism, and emotional and behavioral disabilities.

### **The Process**

Individualized PBS is most effective when it is implemented across all environments, such as: at home, at school and in the community. Positive behavior supports and interventions are most effective when the individual with behavioral challenges and people who know him or her best all work together. The development of a behavior support plan begins with collecting information that leads to a thorough understanding of what a person is communicating through their problem behavior. Then a variety of supports and interventions, that are specific to the individual's unique needs and circumstances, can be designed and implemented.

### **PBS is Effective in Schools**

PBS provides a positive and effective alternative to traditional methods of discipline. PBS methods are research-based and proven to significantly reduce problem behaviors in the school, resulting in a more positive school climate and increased academic performance. PBS is consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which advocates the use of positive behavior interventions and school-based discipline strategies that reduce or eliminate the need to use suspension and expulsion as options.

## **What Works?**

### **Understanding Behavior**

Functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is the foundation of positive behavioral support. FBA is the process of learning about people before intervening in their lives. It is a process for guiding the development of effective and efficient behavior support plans. Three important beliefs underlying FBA are:

1. All behavior that persists serves some purpose,
2. Every person is unique, and
3. Prior to making a change in a person's challenging behavior, you must first understand the function or purpose of the behavior.

## Critical Elements

*Almost 50 years of research has identified the following ten critical elements for effective PBS:*

1. Identifying individuals who need support
2. Matching the level of support to the severity of the problem
3. Developing a collaborative, not expert driven, team approach
4. Identifying goals through person-centered and team processes
5. Using indirect and direct assessment measures to understand the student's behavior and the context of their life (classroom, family, community, etc.).
6. Identifying the function (i.e. why the behavior is occurring) of the behavior and developing a hypothesis statement about why the behavior is occurring.
7. Developing preventative, teaching, reinforcement and lifestyle interventions that are matched to the hypothesis statement.
8. Matching the effective interventions with the specific areas of the individual's life.
9. Supporting and training people (teachers, parents, etc.) to implement the interventions consistently and accurately.
10. Evaluating the effectiveness of the interventions to decrease problem behavior, increase appropriate social behavior, and improve the individual's quality of life.

## IMPORTANT!

A positive behavior support plan (also called a behavior intervention plan or positive intervention plan) is used to teach and reinforce positive behaviors. An effective plan details:

- ◇ skills training that will increase positive behavior,
- ◇ changes that will be made in environments to reduce or eliminate problem behaviors,
- ◇ strategies to replace problem behaviors with appropriate behaviors that serve the same function for the individual, and
- ◇ supports needed for the individual to maintain positive behaviors.

*Adapted from: PACER Center  
"Functional Behavioral Assessment and Positive Interventions: What Parents Need to Know" Brief.  
[www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)*

## FCIC Positive Behavior Support Programs:

- ◇ Center for Autism and Related Disabilities
- ◇ Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children

- ◇ Program-Wide Implementation in Early Childhood
- ◇ Positive Behavior Support Project
- ◇ Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
- ◇ Evidence-Based Interventions for Severe Behavior Problems: The Prevent-Teach-Reinforce Model
- ◇ Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning
- ◇ USF Collaborative for Children, Families and Communities, "Creating Teaching Tools for Young Children with Challenging Behavior"

## Resources

- ◇ *The Florida Positive Behavior Support Projects Facilitator's Guide for Individual PBS*  
[http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/pbs\\_Facilitators\\_Guide.pdf](http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu/pdfs/pbs_Facilitators_Guide.pdf)
- ◇ *National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Website Resources for Individual/Tertiary PBS*  
<http://www.pbis.org/tertiaryPrevention.htm#whatis>
- ◇ *Understanding Problem Behavior: An Interactive Tutorial*  
<http://www.ed.arizona.edu/pbis/index.html>
- ◇ *Association for Positive Behavior Support*  
<http://apbs.org>

*Adapted from the OSEP TAC website ([www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)) and Florida's Positive Behavior Support website (<http://flpbs.fmhi.usf.edu>).*