



BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLANS FOR NON-VERBAL STUDENTS

Toni Lien, M.S., N.C.S.P.

There are certain items to be considered when developing a Behavior Intervention Plan for a non-verbal student, which you may not need to consider for a normally-developing verbal student. The following is a list of discussion items to use as a guide when your team meets to develop the BIP. You may use these as a checklist as you go through the process.

✓ **Important information to consider before beginning the intervention plan:**

- 1) Cognitive ability of student
- 2) Language: expressive and receptive developmental level
- 3) Mode of communication: ASL, gestures, vocalizations, PECS, augmentative communication device
- 4) Awareness of social situations, cues, facial expression, etc.
- 5) What reinforcers student likes— primary and secondary
- 6) What has worked, not worked in the past?
- 7) Does student understand “rules”? Do rules and rituals dictate actions?
- 8) What are special interests, obsessions, comforts?
- 9) Sensory issues: Sensitivity to touch, noises, movement, proximity.
- 10) Does student seek sensory input? In what way?

✓ **Important information to consider when determining the area of focus for the BIP:**

- 1) Identify the behavior that is of **most concern** regarding the student’s ability to learn and /or be safe (student and others). Make a note of other behaviors that you will highlight once the most severe behavior is extinguished.
- 2) As a team, develop a consensus regarding the behavior that most impedes the student’s progress.

✓ **Important information to consider regarding the predictors of the behavior:**

- 1) In what setting do the behaviors occur? What are the student’s communication needs in that setting?
- 2) With whom are these behaviors most likely to occur? What are the means of communication with that person/ those persons?
- 3) Does the student understand the task at hand? Directions or instructions?
- 4) Can the student anticipate the transition from one task to another?
- 5) Are the adults in the setting aware of the students communication needs?

- ✓ **Important information to consider regarding the function of the behavior:**
 - 1) As a team, discuss your hypothesis regarding the purpose this behavior serves using data collected as well as observations by team. Be sure to include the Speech/Language Pathologist in these discussions.
 - 2) Look carefully at the need to communicate a protest or desire.
 - 3) Is the student able to get his/her need communicated through the behavior?
 - 4) Do not overlook the sensation, physical or emotional, provided to the student by exhibiting the behavior.

- ✓ **Important information to consider regarding the environmental factors:**
 - 1) Are necessary tools available in all environments, including mainstream environments, for student to be able to communicate? Tools might include voice output device, PECS book, PECS schedule, switches.
 - 2) Are all staff members responsible for the student trained in the use of communication devices? Can they “read” the student’s vocalizations, body movements, gestures?
 - 3) Are specific areas designated where the student performs certain activities in a routine manner so that the student can anticipate what is expected of him/her?
 - 4) Is information given in a clear manner, using the mode of communication the student understands? Requests, directions, and instructions should be given using differing modes until it is clear that the student understands what is expected of him/her.

- ✓ **Consensus by team members for what you want the student to do instead of displaying the problem behavior(s):**
 - 1) Does the student have the ability to learn to do this replacement behavior? Look at developmental levels. Is student at the pre-symbolic or symbolic stage? Can student understand the use of pictures or symbols to portray real items, activities, or actions?
 - 2) Are the tools available for the student to learn the new skill?
 - 3) Will the behavior be decreased as the student learns to use the new skill?
 - 4) Will the student get what he/she wants or is trying to avoid by using the new skill?
 - 5) How soon can the student move toward the goal? What will success look like?
 - 6) Is the student expected to learn to use the new skill at home? Who will teach parents and siblings to use the communication methods? Will the same materials be available to the parents for home use? (PECS, voice output, etc.)

- ✓ **Important information to consider regarding materials needed to meet the goal:**
 - 1) Who will be responsible for providing the materials? Speech/Language Therapist, teacher, parent.
 - 2) Who will modify the materials as the student progresses toward the goal, or does not progress.
 - 3) Will there be support from Special Ed Department regarding the cost of the materials needed, and the home use of a communication device, if needed?

- ✓ **Important information to consider regarding reinforcement procedures:**
 - 1) What level of approximations will be rewarded? Student makes partial gesture, begins a vocalization, chooses a PEC.
 - 2) What actions, items, and/or interventions are particularly reinforcing to the student? Will they be readily available in all environments including the bus?
 - 3) Will all staff be advised of how and when they are to be used?
 - 4) Who will monitor the continued effectiveness of the reinforcers?

- ✓ **Important information to consider regarding reactive strategies to use if the behavior occurs:**
 - 1) What reactive strategy will reduce the need to use the behavior? Withholding of reinforcer? Ignoring? Verbal or gestural command? Physical prompt? Time away?
 - 2) Does entire team agree with, and are they willing to consistently use, the exact same reactive strategy when the behavior occurs?
 - 3) Who will monitor the effectiveness of the reactive strategy?

- ✓ **Important information to consider regarding provisions for communication between staff and home:**
 - 1) Staff will need to stay in close communication regarding the success of the plan and/ or problems with the plan.
 - 2) Staff will need to monitor the consistency of the use of the plan. Are adjustments being made as needed? Are all providers using the same methods to cue the student?
 - 3) Parents will need to be informed at least weekly regarding the use of the plan at home and at school. What are the successes or road-blocks in using the plan? Are the materials being used consistently so that the student becomes used to communicating through this mode?

After completing the Behavior Intervention Plan, distribute copies to all service providers as well as the student's parents. Plan to meet again in six weeks to review plan and check for understanding and consensus among providers.