Functional Communication Training Using a Multi-Tiered System of Supports

The Importance of Collaboration Between Behavior Clinicians and SLPs

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What Brought Us Here?
• Interdisciplinary Meetings/Approach
• Pieces of the puzzle that we weren’t putting together.

“We already did speech this morning.”

Overcoming Obstacles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Challenges to improve services</th>
<th>Plan to meet the need</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speech Pathologist</td>
<td>Generating strategies to improve functional communication</td>
<td>Private supports implement strategies and components of training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Specialist</td>
<td>Lack of appropriate intervention engagement</td>
<td>Designate role in implementation process and include it in the process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>Too much “down time”</td>
<td>Increase structured activity</td>
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<td>Speech Pathologist</td>
<td>Compliance strategies from regulations to improve communication</td>
<td>Provide ongoing training opportunities in all components of staff role</td>
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<td>Lack of appropriateImplementation</td>
<td>Designate a skill acquisition liaison who includes them in the process</td>
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Summary: What We've Done

- Identify an appropriate area for skill acquisition
- Professionalize the position;
  — RBT (Registered Behavior Technician) Training
- Monthly Consults as a group
- Bi-weekly Consults between Clinician and DC Staff

A Need to Communicate

Motivation to Meet Your Need
What do you want? What do you want to do?
ALWAYS PROVIDE THE ITEM THAT IS SELECTED

Visual & Auditory Localization and Awareness

REACH/POINT TO THE OBJECTS FOR TO INDICATE NEED
Reach to Communicate the Need
Place Screening Board in Front of the Choices
Prompt: 'Look, Hands Down'
Remove Screening Board: "Show me what you want."
Immediately Provide and Label the Selected Item

SCREENING BOARD

A Screening Board is used to signal when it's time to reach and indicate a choice.

Reach to choices that are paired with pictures

The object is paired with life size photographs that are cut to shape.

The objects are gradually covered by the picture
Pictures are placed on communication boards and on communication notebooks.

Communication Board

Communication Notebook

Speech Generating Devices
- Ipad with Speech Generating Apps
- Dedicated Speech Generating Devices
- Communication Builder Multi-levels

Speech Productions / Sign Language are used to meet communication needs.
Why Functional Communication?
Offering people more opportunities to communicate their wants and needs in more functional and appropriate ways.

But what was really happening?

Target Behavior for Reduction
Function of behavior (based on functional assessment)
Functional Alternative

Functional Communication our Reality
- People were receiving different types of instruction
- People were receiving instruction at the wrong times
- People were not receiving enough instruction

Planning Process
Interdisciplinary approach focusing on each individual from a variety of perspectives.
- Clinical team members including speech, psych, (OT and PT as needed)
- Program Managers
- Case managers
- Direct Support Staff.

Planning Process
Staff Buy-In
- Presented it as “you know these guys best. You help us make your lives easier.
- Listened to their suggestions
- Built on current programming so basic daily schedule didn’t change for staff or the individuals we served.
Universal Support Strategies

Our goal was to start at the universal support level, with a hope to naturally see a reduction in challenging behaviors as we offered each person more opportunities for meaningful choices and communication.

- Repeated Instruction - collaboration between speech and psych along with the visuals in each room allowed for several additional instructional opportunities each day.
- Functional Communication/Choice Making - Visuals allowed each person more opportunities to make meaningful choices regarding activities to participate in each day.
- Interaction Style - Each group received some instruction on key phrases and words to use and avoid.

Universal Support Strategies

- Calm Transitions - Each group implemented calm transition times. This included dimming the lights and allowing each group a period of relaxation at the beginning and end of each group session.
  - Quiet
  - Music
  - Social Stories

Implementation
Data

Restraints by Year

Treatment Integrity

- Direct observation completed by speech and clinical staff ongoing
- Booster sessions
- Staff Meetings
- Modeling
- Ongoing data analysis

Successes and Struggles

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<th>Struggles</th>
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<td>Increases in functional communication and independent choice making</td>
<td>Time consuming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decreases in frequencies of challenging behaviors and physical restraints.</td>
<td>Staff turnover means more time training staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decrease in anxiety noted by quieter and more calm environments.</td>
<td>Resources - money for materials and time to fabricate materials.</td>
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<td>Activities that are more structured and enjoyable to individuals.</td>
<td>Changes in environments meant revisiting each person to address new challenges.</td>
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