Behavioral Assessment

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Gathering Data:

1. History and Interview: This involves diagnoses including medical and psychiatric conditions and interviewing people who know the individual the best.

2. Observation: This should occur at different times throughout the day and across all settings. It is recommended several observations occur to watch for antecedents, behavior, and the consequences.

3. Environmental Assessment: This involves assessing the environment for possible causes and/or influences (e.g. noisy, crowed, hot, cold).

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Diagnoses:

Diagnoses that contribute to the understanding of the maladaptive behavior should be present including medical and psychiatric conditions.

For example: Joe is diagnosed with intermittent explosive disorder and visual impairments. When Joe does not wear his glasses, the strain on his eyes can cause headaches.

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Antecedent Behavior:

This data should be used to develop the theory of why the behavior is occurring.

For example: Joe engages in SIB when staff have not interacted with him for 15 minutes or when he has a headache.

Typically headaches occur when Joe does not wear his glasses. Joe will reliably state yes or no when asked if he has a headache.

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Theory of behavior:

Based on the antecedent data, the team forms a viable theory of what is eliciting and sustaining the behavior.

For example, based on antecedent data, the theory might be that Joe engages in SIB for attention if staff do not interact with him for a period of 15 minutes or more.

However, if Joe is not wearing his glasses and staff interact with him, the SIB is thought to be from pain.

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Intervention strategies:

Intervention strategies, including replacement behaviors, are developed and implemented based on the theory of the behavior.

Data is collected. If the theory of behavior is correct then the behavior will decrease. Be aware some behaviors will increase before they decrease (extinction bursts).

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If the theory is not correct then the behavior will typically remain at baseline or increase. The data must then be re-analyzed and new theories developed.

The above process is repeated as interventions are systematically tried and found to be ineffective.

You will want to keep this data as it is also the basis for verifying less restrictive methods have been tried.

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Additional Questions To Ask May Include:

1. How often does Joe engage in SIB when he is wearing glasses and staff are interacting with him?
2. Does the behavior occur more often on one shift?
3. Does the behavior occur with certain staff more than others?
4. Is there a plan to provide reinforcement for wearing glasses?
5. Does he get headaches when wearing glasses?

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Send us your comments or questions at fsb@dhw.idaho.gov.