

# ***Working with Individuals with Challenging Behaviors: A Problem Solving Guide***

## **I. Determine Scope of Problem**

- Is this a real problem?
- Would a better person-environment match help? Is this job a good match to the individual's preferences and choices? Is there another work site that would be more naturally tolerant of the behavior?
- Is it fair to try to change this behavior? Does it represent part of the worker's personality?

Remember that:

- Similar types of behavior occur in almost everyone
- Nearly all behaviors serve an adaptive purpose for the individual
- Because behaviors have a function, all behaviors will not respond to the same intervention techniques

## **II. Fact Finding**

Do a comprehensive assessment of the individual and their environment and preferences.

This process will include:

### ***A. Careful Description of the Behavior***

- What does the behavior look like?
- Is the behavior very rhythmic or cyclical?
- Are there physiological symptoms closely associated with the behavior?
- What related elements seem to go along with this behavior, such as signs of pain, discomfort, changes in mood...?

### ***B. A Functional Analysis Of The Behavior***

- What are the antecedents of the behavior (i.e.: what happens before the behavior occurs)?
- What cues seem to trigger the behavior?
- What general setting events seem to precede the behavior?
- Are there simple environmental modifications (position, scheduling, etc.) that influence the behavior?
- What general instructional factors seem to elicit the behavior (e.g., demands, frustrating situations, supervisor interactions, etc.)?

#### **1. When does the behavior occur?**

#### **2. Where does the behavior occur?**

- Work area?
- Break area?

**3. Who does it occur with or near?**

- Who is present/not present?  
- Staff, co-workers, family, strangers, others

**4. What is the task or activity?**

- Type of job or activity?
- Difficulty/frustration/boredom level of job?
- Demands placed?
- Job preferences?
- Job or schedule changes?

**5. What is the physical environment like?**

- Noise level?
- Temperature?
- Crowded/not crowded?

**6. What personal issues are present?**

- Tired?
- Family issues (relationships, illness, etc.)
- Home issues (staff leaving, roommate problems, etc.)

**7. Are there medical or physiological issues occurring?**

- What are the consequences of this behavior?
- Does this behavior result in any social reinforcement (attention, etc.)?
- Are social or work demands reduced after the behavior occurs?
- Does the worker avoid performing any task or activity?
- What are the exact sensory consequences of this behavior?
- Are appropriate behaviors being reinforced? Does problem behavior receive more or better attention than appropriate behavior?
- What are the antecedent and consequence events when this behavior does not occur?

***C. Identify The Function Of The Behavior***

- Generate ideas about what function the behavior serves for the worker.
- What appropriate behaviors could serve the same function for the person?

**III. Redefine The Problems Or Questions To Be Answered**

Based on the information developed, how can the problem be re-framed or redefined? What questions need to be answered?

#### **IV. Generate Alternative Solutions**

Both this step and choosing a plan need to consider three different categories of solutions. An effective plan *must* include strategies in each of the following categories:

##### ***A. Prevention Strategies (Ecological changes)***

*How can changing the conditions reduce the frequency of the behavior?*

##### ***B. Consequences (How will you respond when the behavior occurs?)***

*Focus on the function of the behavior in deciding how you will respond to it*

Remember: Be respectful!!

##### ***C. Adaptive Alternatives***

*Choose and teach adaptive alternatives that substitute for or replace the behavior*

#### **V. Choose Alternatives**

Develop a plan that addresses each of the three components above.