

Positive Behavior Support Family Questions and Answers

What is Positive Behavior Support (PBS)?

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is an approach for changing a child's behavior that is based on humanistic values and research. It offers an approach for developing an understanding of why the child has challenging behavior and teaching the child new skills to replace challenging behavior. Positive Behavior Support offers a holistic approach that considers all of the factors that impact a child and the child's behavior. It can be used to address challenging behaviors that may range from aggression, tantrums, and property destruction to withdrawing or repetitive behaviors.

How is Positive Behavior Support used in my child's program?

Positive Behavior Support provides a process for identifying the challenging behaviors of the child, developing an understanding of their purpose or function, and developing a behavior support plan that will result in reducing challenging behavior and developing new skills. In your child's program, the behavior support plan is implemented by all caregivers in the program, while also being implemented by the family in the home and community. The use of the support plan ensures that the child's behavior will change quickly, and the child's caregivers will be better able to teach and interact with the child.

How is Positive Behavior Support different from other approaches?

Positive Behavior Support is different from traditional behavior modification in three ways. First, it is focused on the use of positive intervention strategies that are respectful of the child. Second, the interventions that are developed are individualized and are based on an understanding of the child, the child's communication abilities, and the unique situations of the child. Third, the intervention strategies that are developed are focused on helping the child gain access to new environments, have positive social interactions, develop friendships, and learn new communication skills.

Why would my family want to do this?

Positive Behavior Support will provide you with a new understanding of your child's behavior. During the process of Positive Behavior Support, you will learn why your child engages in challenging behavior (e.g., tantrums, withdrawing, self-injury) and how those behaviors are maintained. Your early childhood education provider will work with you to develop a behavior support plan that will include strategies for preventing the occurrence of challenging behavior while teaching your child new skills. The result of Positive Behavior Support should be that your child will have less challenging behavior and new ways of interacting and communicating with others. Once you have learned this process of understanding and intervening with your child's challenging behavior, you will be able to apply it to new situations or circumstances.

What exactly is the process of Positive Behavior Support?

Positive Behavior Support begins by identifying the behaviors that are a concern and observing the behaviors in the situations where they occur. Your early childhood education provider will interview you using a Functional Assessment Interview to identify the situations where challenging behavior occurs and the conditions that relate to the behavior. Your early childhood education provider may also want to conduct observations and collect information by seeing the challenging behaviors actually happen. In addition, you and your early childhood education provider may decide to collect some information to see if certain factors affect the likelihood that your child will have “difficulties” (e.g., lack of sleep, allergies). This process of identifying the challenging behaviors and developing an understanding of what factors surround challenging behavior is called Functional Assessment. The goal of Functional Assessment is to gain an understanding of why your child engages in challenging behavior. The Functional Assessment process ends with the development of a purpose statement or hypothesis statement about the challenging behavior.

The hypothesis statement will describe the conditions or events that “trigger” the challenging behavior, what the challenging behavior means, and how challenging behavior is maintained or reinforced. Your early childhood education provider will work with you in developing these statements. Once the statements are identified, your early childhood education provider will share ideas with you about the following: (a) how the behaviors can be prevented, (b) new skills that your child can be taught, and (c) how to react to the behaviors when they occur. A behavior support plan will be developed that provides a guide for preventing challenging behavior, teaching new skills to replace the behavior, and responding to the behavior in new ways.