

WEST VIRGINIA
EARLY CHILDHOOD
PROVIDER
QUARTERLY

All About Project DOCC

**Helping Children with
Challenging Behaviors Adapt**

Providing Family Coaching During COVID-19

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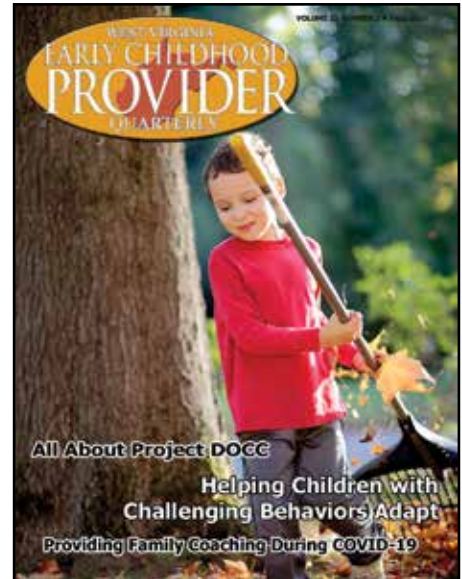
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Finding a Better Way: **Helping Children with Challenging Behaviors Adapt**

Submitted by Carmen Fullmer, MS, Behavior Support Mentor, WVU Center for Excellence in Disabilities

Seeking Clues to Solve a Mystery

Figuring out what motivates children to behave the way they do often involves unraveling a mystery. Did the child's actions come out of nowhere or was there something we were not aware of that prompted them? All behaviors happen for a reason, even if the reason is not always clear. Because each child is unique, understanding the youth's motivation is even more complicated.

Discerning possible reasons might take some detective work. Like Scooby Doo and the gang, we can use our powers of observation to find clues and notice patterns in the child's behaviors that persist. While observing a situation as it unfolds, it can be useful to break down what we are looking for into smaller parts, like noticing the behavior itself, what happened before the behavior, and what happened after the behavior — i.e., the outcome. Further, we could analyze the outcome to discover what possible function the behavior served in expressing the child's needs.



Gathering data and insight to form a theory about the behavior's function is key to offering more effective behaviors and positive strategies that would meet the child's needs. It can also help provide clues about how to teach children to make good habits and engage in alternative behaviors consistently and routinely.

PBS Provides the Framework

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is

an evidence-based framework that can help solve the mystery. It can help parents and professionals figure out what a child wants to achieve by doing a challenging behavior. The process leads to developing a plan that identifies positive interventions and functionally equivalent replacement behaviors (FERBs) that would be more appropriate and easier to accomplish, while still meeting the child's needs. For example, a child could learn to use a code word as

an alternative to yelling to ask for a parent's attention; the parent would then provide one-on-one time with the child, like reading a story together.

Central to PBS is the theme of making environmental adjustments to help improve a child's quality of life. This involves enhancing the environment by making small, adaptable changes to what is happening around the child. Changes might include things like adjusting lighting, reducing noise levels, using softer textures, providing an organized learning space, and providing a calming space. It could mean changing the pace by playing upbeat music to engage a kid who is bored or playing soothing music to help calm a child who is anxious. It might also involve changing when things are done, like having an afternoon nap before going to the store and encouraging quiet, relaxing activities before bedtime. Changing communication style might mean telling or asking children to do something in a different way by breaking down tasks into shorter, simpler instructions or using visual prompts to promote independence.

Positive Behavior Support is a person-centered process with a case-by-case approach to matching uplifting solutions to the focus person. PBS specialists apply this values-based approach to support the person's

dignity and honor the fact that each child is an individual with specific needs, wants, goals, and dreams.

Positive Behavior Support Specialists Guide the Way

The Mountain State has a rich history of Positive Behavior Support specialists working with children and families to find a better, more positive way to behave, blossom, succeed, and engage with others.

West Virginia was the first state to create its own statewide PBS network. Established in 2003, the West Virginia Association for Positive Behavior Support (WVAPBS) Network is "committed statewide to promote the philosophy, core values and evidence-based practices of positive behavior support." Board member Christine Dickson explained, "It's a way for professionals across systems and across the lifespan to share ideas, information, and to promote PBS." As a way to assure fidelity of practice and quality of services in the state, WVAPBS has established an endorsement process for PBS professionals who wish to apply. Dickson said, "It will also help people that need the service to ensure that providers are qualified." To find out more about the WVAPBS Network and its endorsement process, visit <http://www.wvapbs.com>.

Community-based Positive Behav-

ior Support services are available in all 55 counties through the Center for Excellence in Disabilities (CED) at West Virginia University. Behavior Specialist Nick Larson shared, "PBS can help facilitate new perspectives and appreciation for both our clients and the diverse individuals who make up their support system. We have been blessed with numerous strong and ongoing partnerships to spread person-centered practices across the state."

The collaborative PBS team at the CED offers an array of personalized services — including solution-centered brainstorming, person-centered planning, individualized intensive services, technical assistance and mentoring for professionals, and specialized trainings.

The PBS brainstorming service is a one-hour telehealth consultation, in which team members work together with individuals, families, or caregivers to explore solutions for challenging behaviors and suggest relevant resources. Brainstorming also offers a gateway to determining what other PBS services might be of particular benefit for participants. For example, individualized intensive services might be appropriate for a child with a serious emotional disorder, who needs help addressing specific dangerous behaviors and is at risk of out-of-home placement. Another service that might be ap-

appropriate for a youth pondering the future is person-centered planning. With this planning process, PBS facilitators use fun interactive tools to show how the positive and possible aspect of the person's dreams can translate into viable actions and goals for creating a more personally fulfilling future.

The CED's PBS team has expanded their outreach in West Virginia and beyond its borders by providing web-based trainings — on topics like PBS for Parents, Trauma-Informed PBS, De-escalation Techniques for First Responders, and Increasing Quality of Life. PBS Program Assistant Angela DeMoss reflected, “The general consensus from participants in our trainings is that they are highly satisfied with the material they've been provided, and have gained knowledge on topics like Positive Behavior Support and how to help others and themselves create a better quality of life.” WV professionals in the field might also benefit from participating in the team's technical assistance and mentoring services.

To learn more about available services and upcoming trainings, you're welcome to call and talk with a member of the PBS team at 855-558-4296.

To apply for services, check out the training calendar, or access the

team's quarterly newsletter, The Support Report, visit their website at <http://pbs.cedwvu.org>.

Positive Behavior Support services offer hope for families struggling to cope with difficult behavioral issues. PBS specialists can help families demystify challenging behavior and help children learn to choose more effective, balanced ways to express themselves.

BILD. (2015). An Introduction to PBS. Centre for the Advancement of PBS at BILD. Retrieved from <https://www.bild.org.uk/resource/an-introduction-to-pbs>.

