

Intervention Case Study 3

Introduction

Felix is a seventh grader at a school in Oregon. At the age of seven, Felix was hit by a car and suffered a traumatic brain injury, leaving him with physical and learning disabilities. He cannot use his right arm and leg to the full extent, and has difficulties with speaking and learning. Recently, Felix is exhibiting problem behaviors. He deliberately runs into other students in the hallways, he attempts to hit teachers and other students, and sometimes leaves classes and school without permission. His punishments include detention, referrals to the office, and suspension from school.

A team was established consisting of two of Felix's teachers, the vice principal of his school, his mother, and a member of the school-wide behavior support team. It is important for a team to not only include skilled professionals, but those people who best know and connect with Felix. In a school situation, it is also important to have team members involved in the school.

Measurement

The team used observation as well as interviews with his teacher and mother about what they tried to do to deal with problem behaviors in the past, Felix's schedule, his medical information, and his likes and dislikes. Felix's teachers also recorded when he engaged in problem behaviors throughout his school day.

Functional Behavioral Assessment

The team identified an escalating pattern of behavior for Felix. He would start with whining and when that was ignored he would move to pounding, then refusing to stop, then throwing things and hitting others, then leaving the room and destroying property. The team concluded Felix engages in such behaviors when faced with a difficult task, when teased by other students and chastised by teachers, or when cannot do something he wants to do.

Intervention

The goal was to help Felix behave more appropriately in those situations where he became frustrated and to teach him to communicate his frustration. A self-management system was used wherein Felix would make note of his own behavior and give himself points when he showed appropriate behavior. Felix was taught how to self-manage through the use of role play-so he was allowed to see in what situations he would give himself points, ask for a break, and ask for help.

For those times he still engaged in problem behavior, he would need to stay after school for the same length of time he spent engaging in the problem behavior. At the end of the day, Felix gives himself a plus if he has his materials and a plus if he does not tantrum, and zeros if he does not have his materials or tantrums. He verifies his records with the teacher, getting attention and feedback then at the end of everyday. Felix earns rewards for days with all pluses as well as more long-term rewards as the pluses accumulate.

Results

Felix is consistently more prepared and well behaved in class. He has also learned how to communicate what he is feeling better. Felix's time after school decreased as the intervention went on. For the first months of the intervention, he would have a major tantrum around once a week but in the later months he rarely did.

Todd, A., Horner, R., Vanater, S., & Schneider, C. (1997). Working together to make change: An example of positive behavioral support for a student with traumatic brain injury. *Education and Treatment of Children, 20*, 425-440.