

## **APPENDIX B: Gaining Informed Consent for PFA-SBT**

The IDEA requires that the IEP team gain informed consent to educational assessment and treatment. Informed consent is achieved when a parent/caregiver has a full understanding of the possible risks and benefits of treatment, and permission to proceed is granted.

- i. To adequately inform families about the rationale and process of PFA-SBT, so that they are best positioned to provide consent, provide materials about PFA/STB in advance:
  - PFA/STB Overview (see p. 2) or similar
  - PFA-SBT Sequence (see p. 3)
- ii. Schedule a time to speak with family members / caregivers in advance, to answer their questions, and describe the assessment and treatment process. Assess family members' comfort level and adjust plans as needed.
- iii. Follow up with family members / caregivers afterwards, to answer any questions and describe next steps. Confirm that there will be regular implementation meetings to plan, problem-solve, and adjust treatment.
- iv. Let family members know who they should contact if they have questions and to receive updates on their child's progress.

## What is Practical Functional Assessment and Skill-Based Treatment?

### The Main Points

- All children engage in some problematic behavior, but for some, it happens often enough and/or with such intensity as to interfere with the achievement of learning, socializing, or being fully included in school life.
- These behaviors might include self-injury, physical aggression towards others, property destruction, etc.
- Severe problem behavior happens, in large part, because it produces personally relevant outcomes (reinforcers) for the person who exhibits it.
- All children, including those with autism or other diagnoses, can live a life free from severe problem behavior.
- Freedom from problem behavior is possible when children are explicitly taught skills for coping with challenging situations, and those skills are generalized across a variety of contexts.

### The Process

- A practical functional assessment (PFA) is used to inform a skill-based treatment (SBT).
- PFA consists of two steps:
  - (1) Interview: to gather information about the situations in which problem behavior tends to occur
  - (2) Analysis:
    - First, we set up the child's perfect day—or as close to it as we can reasonably get. The child's personal reinforcers are freely available and there are no "triggers" for problem behavior. We do this to establish trust, build rapport, and ensure that we understand what makes the child happy, relaxed, and engaged.
    - Then, we gradually introduce some challenges. But, if the child shows any sign that they are unhappy (that problem behavior is imminent), we immediately stop and return to the child's perfect day context. We do this to confirm that we understand some of the factors that trigger problem behavior for the child, as well as how to safely stop problem behavior.
    - We will repeat the above a few times to confirm that we have a strong understanding of the child's needs.
- The priorities in the PFA are safety, dignity, and rapport building.
- Treatment follows directly from the PFA.
- Treatment consists of progressively teaching communication, tolerance for frustration, and a range of contextually appropriate behaviors (CABs). Common CABs include relinquishing favorite items, transitioning to a workspace, completing academic work, playing independently, playing according to the rules of a game, completing chores, or completing self-care tasks.
- Repeated practice is essential to building these skills, as is reinforcement on an unpredictable and intermittent schedule.
- The overall goal of treatment is to teach children how to behave safely and productively in spite of the normal ambiguities, unpredictability, and disappointments of everyday life. Strong, trusting relationships between children and teachers are developed and maintained even when teachers challenge children.

## PFA-SBT Sequence

### ***Step 1: Open-Ended Interview***

We will spend approximately 30-minutes discussing your child's strengths and needs, especially as they relate to challenging behavior.

### ***Step 2: Assessment Planning***

We will spend approximately 1.5 hours designing the analysis (including role play and data collection) and discussing teaching goals.

### ***Step 3: Observation***

We will spend approximately 60-minutes observing your child's classroom context to identify important classroom challenges and generalization priorities.

### ***Step 4: Assessment Implementation***

We will spend approximately 2 hours preparing, implementing, and discussing your child's analysis. We'll follow this general agenda:

*15 min:* Prepare space, check technology, review plan

*75 min:* Analysis and, time-permitting, begin treatment with your child

*30 min:* Debrief and discuss next steps