

## **COMPETENCY STANDARD 2: BEHAVIOR SUPPORT**

*The qualified direct support professional (DSP) is competent in the area of “behavior support” as it relates to individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities and Mental Illness (IDD/MI).*

### **OVERVIEW**

Many people with IDD/MI engage in behavior that is disruptive, dangerous, or difficult. The qualified DSP recognizes that challenging behaviors serve a function for people. (A way to get their needs met.) The DSP recognizes behavior choices are complex. They may arise from a variety of conditions or a combination of conditions. For example, people may be under stress caused by a mental health disorder-such as hallucinations or trauma exposure. They may have sensory or processing issues. They may be experiencing physical discomfort as part of an illness or a side effect of medication.

Cognitive or developmental challenges may also make it difficult for people to behavior appropriately. People may struggle to communicate effectively. They may not be able to learn appropriate behavior from typical experiences. They may not understand why they must tolerate things they find unpleasant or confusing. They may not be able to make sense of situations quickly or easily. These issues may cause frustration and anxiety. They may decrease people’s capacity to respond appropriately to demands and expectations.

The qualified DSP recognizes that the goal of behavior support is not to control the person. The ability to behave appropriately increases opportunities in life. The DSP uses behavior support to increase the person’s quality of life. The DSP supports independence, choice, and control. The DSP has strategies and capacity to assist with three primary goals of behavior support: 1) identify the function of the behavior; 2) assist people in learning to express and meet his/her needs productively; and 3) support the positive capacity to tolerate frustration and self-manage behavior. Of all professionals, DSPs often spend the most time with people supported. They recognize that they are in a unique position to support these goals.

The qualified DSP is knowledgeable of and skilled in using evidence-based strategies in behavior support. He/she uses and records data and information appropriately. The DSP works in close collaboration with the individual and their team. He/she includes each person’s goals, culture, treatment plan, and personal preferences in behavioral support.

### **AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL**

The following areas of knowledge and skill have been identified as benchmarks for satisfying Competency Standard 2: Behavior Support.

Benchmark 2A: Knowledge and Assessment of the Causes and Functions of Challenging Behavior

Benchmark 2B: Maintaining a Supportive Physical and Social Environment

Benchmark 2C: Responding to Challenging Behavior

Benchmark 2D: Teaching New Behaviors and Skills

For each benchmark, “performance indicators” have been developed to measure the DSP’s mastery of that benchmark.

**BENCHMARK 2A: Knowledge and Assessment of the Causes and Functions of Challenging Behavior**

The qualified DSP is knowledgeable of factors that influence behavior for people supported and in general. He/she is skilled at recognizing functions of behavior and triggers or antecedents for each individual. When challenging behavior is persistent or serious, the DSP is able to coordinate support with others. He/she supports the formal assessment of the function of the behavior. The DSP tracks, summarizes, and shares information about behavior. He/she uses this information as the basis of understanding the success or failure of strategies of behavior support.

*Benchmark 2A Performance Indicators*

In the area of “cause and function of challenging behavior,” the qualified DSP:

1. Uses observation and communication with individuals to identify purpose or function of challenging behavior.
2. Recognizes when formal functional assessment would be helpful and advocates for one as necessary with team.
3. Participates in formal functional behavior assessment as requested.
4. Collects ongoing data consistently and accurately regarding behavior as requested.
5. Gives examples of how common mental health disorders and IDD may trigger or contribute to challenging behavior.
6. Gives examples of how physical and medical conditions (acute and chronic), including seizure disorders, brain injury and medication side effects can trigger or contribute to challenging behavior.
7. Gives examples of how the characteristics of autism spectrum disorders and/or sensory processing disorders can trigger or contribute to challenging behavior.
8. Gives examples of how barriers to communication, cognitive flexibility, planning, and impulse control can influence behavior.
9. Gives examples of how behavior is defined by culture and can influence the perception of appropriateness (e.g., eye contact, voice tone, personal space, etc.).
10. Uses observation and analysis of behavior to differentiate the signs and symptoms of common syndromes and disorders from symptoms of mental health conditions.
11. Gives examples of how support of or lack of choice and control may influence behavior.
12. Identifies the specific syndromes or disorders that influence behavior control for the individuals he or she supports.

13. Identifies cultural patterns and influences that may influence the perception of appropriateness of behavior for the individuals he or she supports.
14. Uses results of functional assessments to identify supports that are likely to be successful in development of new behaviors.
15. Recognizes that abrupt or serious changes in emotions and behavior are potential signs of mental or physical health problems and informs appropriate people in a timely way.

## **BENCHMARK 2B: Maintaining a Supportive Physical and Social Environment**

The qualified DSP is aware of patterns and triggers to challenging behavior and plans accordingly. He/she is skilled at adapting demands and supporting new skill development. The DSP recognizes and build on a person's strengths and interests. He/she encourages maximum choice and control in each environment. The DSP is validating and reinforcing of the person's use of positive behavior choices.

### *Benchmark 2B Performance Indicators*

In the area of "supportive physical and social environment," the qualified DSP:

1. Provides a positive physical and social environment consistent with the preferences and expectations of individuals supported.
2. Uses effective methods to ensure that expectations are clear to individuals and presented in ways that make sense to them.
3. Maximizes each person's choices and ability to control his or her environment at all times.
4. Keeps people informed about changes in plans, expectations, or other issues that affect them. Supports them to participate to the maximum extent possible in decisions regarding these situations.
5. Uses effective and respectful communication strategies. Is patient and appropriate when communicating with individuals.
6. Recognizes early signs of frustration or confusing and helps individual's identify and self-manage frustration levels and communicate needs effectively.
7. Recognizes unique environmental triggers for challenging behavior for each individual and plans accordingly to avoid triggers or support the person in an appropriate response to triggers.
8. Is validating of individual's feelings and experiences and supports people in recognizing and labeling feelings.
9. Is encouraging of positive behavior and recognizes, rewards, and celebrates the use of new skills and appropriate responses on a daily basis with individuals.
10. Modifies his/her interaction style and expectations in response to each individual's mood and behavior in the moment.

## **BENCHMARK 2C: Responds to Challenging Behavior**

The qualified DSP can successfully interrupt or prevent use of challenging behavior. He/she responds to challenging behavior in a skillful, respectful, and professional manner. The qualified DSP uses information from the whole team to develop and assess strategies.

### *Benchmark 2C Performance Indicators*

In the area of “responding to challenging behavior,” the qualified DSP:

1. Deescalates challenging behavior by acting quickly to modify conditions (environmental, social, or others conditions) that may contribute to the behavior.
2. Recognizes the communicative intent of behavior and suggests or demonstrates alternative behavior that will help the individual meet needs in an appropriate ways.
3. Stays calm, focused, and supportive of the individual and his or her needs when engaging around challenging behavior.
4. Responds to challenging behavior in such a way that minimized reinforcement of the unwanted behavior and reinforces the use of desirable behavior related to the individual's motivation, as identified by formal or informal functional behavior assessment.
5. Follows treatment and behavior support plans as written and gives appropriate and timely feedback to plan writers regarding barriers and effectiveness.
6. Documents any incidents of challenging behavior in accordance with existing plans and policies. Follows documentation protocol for special incident reporting and contacts appropriate team member(s) or supervisor(s).
7. Is familiar with and engages crisis intervention and response plans when behavior is dangerous or has extreme consequences for the individual or others.
8. Ensures the safety of the individual and others when crisis behavior occurs.
9. Advocates for an effective crisis plan to be in place when a person has dangerous or serious behaviors.
10. Avoids physical management of people in behavioral crisis. Uses personal control techniques only when properly trained, when risk to safety is immediate and unavoidable and in accordance with employer policy and guidelines and all applicable laws and regulations.
11. Explains legal, ethical, and practical reasons why aversive procedures should not be used and reports any unauthorized or aversive procedures to appropriate persons.
12. Avoids the use of aversive techniques. Uses these only with explicit permission in a treatment plan that has been developed by a treatment team, been given informed consent, reviewed by all required committees and found compliant with all existing policies,

regulations, and laws, and when there is clear evidence that there is no other effective response or prevention options that affect the behavior.

## **BENCHMARK 2D: Teaching New Behaviors and Skills**

The qualified DSP demonstrates skill in teaching and support methods related to behavior support. The DSP understands that the individual with intellectual disabilities may have cognitive challenges that affect learning. However, he/she does not make assumptions on individual learning potential. The DSP recognizes that behavior is complex. He/she teaches skills related to behavior management. However, he/she also recognizes that quality of life affects behavior. He /she take the time to teach life skills that promote independence, integration, and opportunity.

### *Benchmark 2D Performance Indicators*

In the area of “teaching new behaviors and skills,” the qualified DSP:

1. Uses basic principles of effective communication and teaching including clearly communicating expectations, checking for understanding, and adjusting styles to meet unique needs.
2. Identify incremental steps to behavior change and teaches and supports the next positive step for the person in behavior management.
3. Encourages people to define their own reasons and strategies for self-management of behavior rather than relying only on external consequences and guidance to maintain control.
4. Supports people in developing ability to identifying and use the likely natural consequences that follow behavior as a method of making behavioral decisions.
5. Uses formal or informal functional behavior assessment and person-centered planning to guide choices and methods skill development and reinforcement.
6. Takes steps to protect people appropriately from severe consequences of behavior, even if these are “natural consequences.”
7. Identifies and uses appropriate replacement behaviors for challenging behaviors.
8. Models appropriate behavior and interactions.
9. Uses reinforcement frequently, appropriately and positively.
10. Assists individuals in identifying new skills as an alternative to meet behavior function.
11. Uses techniques identified in a behavior support plan to develop new skills.
12. Tailors instruction and intervention strategies to address individual differences, preferences, goals, learning styles, and culture.
13. Uses the least restrictive effective approach to change behavior.