Practitioners such as teachers and school psychologists sometimes develop and implement behavior intervention plans (BIPs) for students with problem behavior. Although much has been written and considerable training exists on proper development and implementation, managing a BIP can be a daunting task. Several years ago, Foxx described what **not** to do in management of BIPs (Foxx, 1996). He described some of the key reasons BIPs fail to produce behavior change in children and adults with special needs. Below, I list the 10 mismanagement items identified by Foxx, then identify five additional problems that practitioners may encounter. For each problem, I will describe ways to safeguard against errors so that interventions are maximally successful in serving the student's needs.

1. Practitioners wait until the problem behavior is severe before intervening. As a problem behavior becomes severe, the child practices it and learns to recruit reinforcement to strengthen the behavior. Instead, intervene early. Prevent problem behaviors from becoming severe and intractable.

How to Mismanage Behavior Intervention Plans

2. The social environment does not provide the positive reinforcement required in the plan. Too often, problem behavior occurs because it is the only behavior that produces immediate and powerful consequences for a student. Instead, catch kids being good! Make a concerted effort to recognize appropriate social behavior. Create a list of appropriate behaviors to be recognized and praised. Recognize those adults and children who reinforce appropriate behaviors.

3. Ten percent is knowing what to do; 90% is getting people to do it. Many school environments operate as if the goal on any given day is to maintain the status quo, even if it does not produce maximum achievement for every child. Instead, shake it up! Talk to the district special education director and/or principal. Get their commitments to assist you in moving every child as far as they can go as fast as they can get there. Present the commitment to the classroom staff and encourage them to come along for the ride. Then be ready to recognize staff for their support and initiative.

4. The most difficult, long-standing problem behavior is targeted first. It is difficult to avoid prioritizing the most severe problem behavior. If possible, target other problems first. If not, make sure all the potential pitfalls described here are avoided.

5. Direct staff do not get adequate training in implementing procedures. Direct staff often do not have time to attend meetings to discuss student problem behaviors or to participate in training. Yet they are the staff who most frequently interact with the student. Potential solutions: (a) Train on the spot! The most effective training is often "in the line of fire." (b) If not possible or as a supplement to "a," create innovative ways to deliver training. Leave notes at the teacher's desk and ask staff to sign off after reading

them or write questions about procedures. Correspond through email or digital voice recording. Staff are usually willing to learn, so find a communication avenue that works for them.

6. The function of the behavior is misidentified or the behavior has multiple functions and only one is identified. BIPs based on functional behavior assessment (FBA) are more effective in eliminating problem behavior than generic BIPs (Ingram, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai, 2005). However, identifying the function of a problem behavior can be elusive because it can change over time, change across settings, or serve multiple functions. In these circumstances, make FBA an ongoing assessment process. If possible, repeatedly observe the problem behavior to identify the function. Explain the process to a colleague and ask for an independent observation. Ask for outside assistance. When a practitioner implements a BIP and the function has been misidentified, the data usually reveal inadequate behavior change and an observation usually pinpoints the solution. There is a "self-correction" process if FBA is considered an ongoing activity.

7. Experts disappear when the program is implemented. Solution: get a commitment up front for periodic visits from experts. A true expert knows the level of support needed for a successful BIP.

8. Some staff have success but do not communicate the specific strategies to others who struggle and eventually give up or become resentful. In some cases, the BIP becomes a battlefield where one or more staff are successful and either flaunt their success or get sabotaged by the unsuccessful staff. Solution: the BIP manager needs to take a firm hold of the situation and restore common commitment of all staff. Strong leadership is imperative. Powerful consequences for staff (positive and negative) may be necessary.

9. After some degree of success, staff relax. This one seems fairly common from our experience. And yet, the solution is probably in the hands of the practitioner. As part of the staff commitment to make the social environment as positive as possible, establish a commitment that "complacency is the worst problem behavior and won't be tolerated." When a student makes a gain, set a new goal. Given data collected on the student behavior, set new marks every few days for successive improvements.

10. After lack of success, staff give up. The practitioner managing the BIP should frequently collect data on the problem behavior, at least initially. If the problem behavior is not changing in the desired direction after three data points, assess to identify the reason. Talk to direct staff. If possible, talk to the student. What accounts for lack of behavior change? Is it ineffective reinforcers, lack of access to reinforcers, too much expectation in initial behavior change, misidentified function, or lack of implementation of procedures? Call a meeting right away and communicate the need for changes.
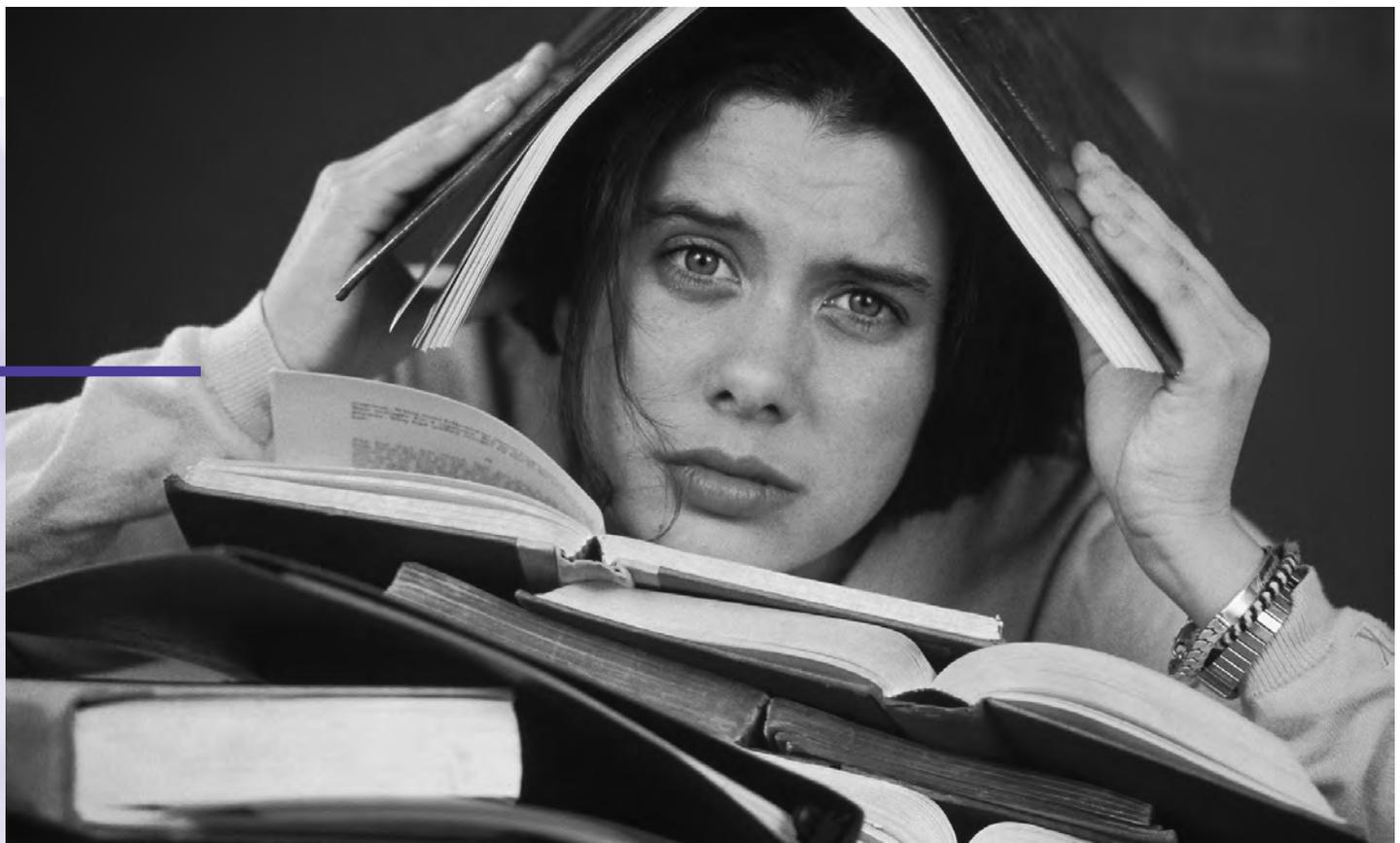
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Other procedures not identified by Foxx (1996) but potentially important include the following:

11. The student is not actively involved in development of the BIP. Students at every level of intellectual or communicative function can participate in developing their BIP by identifying reinforcers, scheduling delivery of reinforcers, setting initial behavior expectations, etc. Set up the BIP as a behavior contract and create it with the student's input. Review the BIP contract periodically. The more students are involved, the more they will "own the outcome."

12. Too many problem behaviors are targeted at the start of intervention. It is fairly common for BIP managers to use the "Hoover" approach and vacuum up every potential problem behavior as a target, sometimes giving it a generic name like "noncompliance." Instead, start with a medium-to-high priority target, define it specifically so staff know what it is, and get initial success. With initial success, new target behaviors can be added.

are stable, identify the range (high to low). Set the initial expectation for the replacement behavior at the high end of the baseline range. Set the initial expectation for the problem behavior at the low end of the baseline range. Teach the replacement behavior and make available immediate reinforcers for meeting expectations. If successful, move systematically to set more stringent expectations. Make decisions on new expectations based on the student's data on problem and replacement behavior.

15. The initial delay of reinforcement is too long and the student loses motivation. For most students who participate in BIPs, "immediate gratification" is their byword. They can learn to delay gratification but only if the practitioner starts with reinforcers of very short delay and then, based on success, lengthens the duration. Although the initial delay may appear minimal and unreasonable to some observers, it will probably be necessary to gain success. So students may initially need access to powerful reinforcers almost immediately following appropriate behavior (e.g., the end of a 30-minute period). After accessing it five consecutive times,

13. In their haste to change a difficult or emergency situation, practitioners implement the BIP immediately without identifying the problem behavior's function. Solution: Initially implement a differential reinforcement strategy (i.e., reinforce an alternative, more appropriate behavior) or change staff supervision to get control of the situation. However, consider it a "stopgap" strategy and immediately set up a FBA to create a more effective FBA-based BIP. Seek assistance among district or state-level specialists to help conduct the FBA and design an intervention.

14. Initial expectations for behavior are set too high and the student does not reach the expected level. The best clue for setting an initial expectation for reducing a problem behavior or increasing a replacement behavior is the baseline data. Collect at least three sessions of baseline data to find out the level of the problem and replacement behavior. If the baseline data

delay the reinforcer to twice the initial duration (e.g., end of a 60-minute period). Use the same rule to delay it again (2 hours, 4 hours, end of the day, twice a week, end of week). Moving too fast to delay is far more serious and difficult to recoup than moving too slow. Provide choice of several powerful reinforcers to maintain motivation.

There are many ways to mismanage BIPs. Hopefully, describing common errors and their correction may help practitioners avoid the pitfalls that await them. The benefits are clear: long-term behavior change for students with special needs. ■