Practical Functional Assessment and Treatment of Severe Problem Behavior

Gregory P. Hanley, PhD, BCBA-D

November 21, 2019

Eberhard Center on Grand Valley State University’s Pew Campus

AGENDA (1 day training)

8:00 – 8:30am  Sign in
8:30 – 10:00am  Functional Assessment of Severe Problem Behavior: A Focus on a Safer, Faster, and More Effective Process
10:00 – 10:15am  BREAK
10:15 – 11:30am  Functional Assessment of Severe Problem Behavior: A Focus on a Safer, Faster, and More Effective Process
11:30am – 12:15pm  LUNCH
12:15 – 1:45pm  Treating Severe Problem Behavior: A Focus on Strengthening Socially Important Behavior
1:45 – 2:00pm  BREAK
2:00 – 3:30pm  Treating Severe Problem Behavior: A Focus on Strengthening Socially Important Behavior

MORNING:

Title: Functional Assessment of Severe Problem Behavior: A Focus on a Safer, Faster, and More Effective Process

Abstract: Behavioral intervention can be effective for addressing problem behavior like meltdowns, self-injury, and aggression, especially when a functional assessment of the problem is conducted to determine why the problem behavior is occurring. A number of myths regarding the functional assessment process, which appear to be pervasive within different research and practice communities, will be reviewed in the context of a series of empirical evaluations demonstrating the effectiveness and social validation of a particular functional assessment process. Through lecture, interactive discussion, and role play, attendees should be able to conduct interviews to discover synthesized reinforcement contingencies that may be influencing problem behavior and then design and implement safe, fast, and effective functional analyses from the interviews to determine the legitimacy of suspected reinforcement contingencies.

Objectives:
1. An attendee should be able to describe the conditions under which the different types of functional assessment (closed and open-ended indirect assessments, formal and informal descriptive assessments, functional analyses) should and should not be used when attempting to understand why problem behavior is occurring.
2. An attendee will be able to describe multiple tactics to improve the safety and efficiency of the functional assessment process, especially the functional analysis part of the process.
3. An attendee will be able to describe various tactics for efficiently determining whether different topographies of problem behavior are influenced by the same reinforcing contingency.
4. An attendee should be able to defend the practice of relying on synthesized reinforcement contingencies when functionally analyzing problem behavior and articulate the advantages of functional control over functional classification.

AFTERNOON:

Title: Treating Severe Problem Behavior: A Focus on Strengthening Socially Important Behavior

Abstract: The success of treatments for problem behaviors like meltdowns, self-injury, or aggression is largely dependent on whether the treatment is based on the function the problem behavior serves for the person with autism. But because of the focus on detecting the impact of single variables in behavior analytic research, effective behavioral technology is often fractured across studies, resulting in a dearth of studies showing socially valid improvements in these problem behaviors and an absence of studies illustrating the treatment process from start to finish. In this session, an effective, comprehensive, and parent-validated treatment process for problem
behavior will be described. The comparative research that underscores the importance of focusing on the skills of communication, toleration, and contextually appropriate behavior will be reviewed. The logistics of implementing this treatment in a variety of contexts that differ in personnel will be discussed.

Objectives:
1. An attendee will be able to describe strategies for teaching individuals with severe problem behavior to engage in an omnibus communication response and then procedures for differentiating the response so that a communication repertoire is established.
2. An attendee will be able to describe the key components of strategies for teaching individuals with severe problem behavior to tolerate both delays to and denials of reinforcers previously maintaining their problem behavior.
3. An attendee should be able to describe how contextually appropriate behavior (compliance, independent academic work and play) may be shaped and maintained during variable and sometimes long delays to the reinforcers that historically maintained problem behavior.