

Behavioral Definitions Cheat Sheet

The following behavioral terms and definitions have been included to aid in understanding and successful implementation of behavioral supports. Please feel free to request clarification or examples!

- **Antecedents:** events that happen directly before the challenging behavior and are predictors for that behavior occurring (when is the challenging behavior most likely to occur?)
- **Baseline:** the “starting point” of a targeted behavior or skill which frequently includes a current average of the behavior by frequency, duration, intensity, and cycle/course of behavior
- **Behavior:** an observable and measurable act an individual performs
- **Consequences:** events that happen immediately after the behavior; this includes the responses of others and the outcomes for the client, which may maintain the challenging behavior
- **Data Collection Methods:** because data guides behavioral programming, there are many types of data collection and the recommended type varies with each individual case and behavior
- **Hypothesized Function of Behavior:** the “best guess” at why the behavior is occurring, observable information is recorded and analyzed in order to make this determination and the function of the behavior guides the behavioral interventions
- **Operational Definition:** includes what the behavior looks like and what counts as an instance of behavior, and what does not; this must be in clear language that is understandable and able to be interpreted by anyone supporting the client
- **Precursors:** behavior that may occur right before the challenging behavior is displayed; thought of as a warning that the challenging behavior is likely to occur in the very near future
- **Proactive Interventions:** these include strategies for support persons to implement prior to the display of challenging behaviors, and are developed with a focused effort to prevent the behavior from occurring entirely, or to decrease the intensity and overall frequency of the behavior
- **Reactive Interventions:** these include strategies for support persons to implement following an incident of the targeted challenging behavior; consistency is key here!
- **Reinforcement:** the act of adding to (positive) or removing from (negative) the environment which cause an increase in the frequency or intensity of the targeted behavior (reinforcers are unique to the individual; reinforcing is not a synonym for enjoys)
- **Replacement Skills:** these include what skills the individual may benefit from learning and/or utilizing in place of the challenging behavior; it should provide the same function as the challenging behavior and is targeted for an increase
- **Setting Events:** events in the person’s environment or daily routine that do not necessarily happen immediately before the behavior but increases the likelihood of a specific behavior occurring; they may have occurred in the morning yet influence problem behaviors in the afternoon (such as not getting enough sleep the night before, skipping breakfast, having a headache, etc.) and may also include internal events such as basic needs
- **Teaching Methods:** these include evidence-based methods that may be used to teach the replacement skills
- **Topography:** what instances of targeted behavior look like; does not include items open for interpretation (such as happy, mad, anxious) but instead focuses on what is physically observable and not open to interpretation