

“... a behavioural support plan is a document that is designed to change the behaviour of adults with the expectation that if adult behaviour changes, the behaviour of the student will change.”

– Robert Horner and George Sugai,
“Developing Positive Behavioral Support Systems”

Students with behaviour disabilities may respond to some universal strategies used in the school-wide positive behaviour support system. However, these students require additional intensive and individualized strategies and support. These strategies need to be documented and communicated in a formal individual behaviour support plan based on these students’ unique and individual characteristics. These step-by-step plans provide key information about a student’s behaviour for staff who work with the student. The information in the plan needs to include:

- key understandings about this student’s behaviour
- conditions or antecedent events that are most likely to trigger the problem behaviour
- warning signs that the student is experiencing difficulty
- plans for diffusing the situation
- positive supports to help the student increase his or her abilities
- what peers need to learn to do to support this student
- other strategies school staff can use to support and encourage this student.



Tool 8 provides a sample template of an individual behaviour support plan.

Staff need to read this plan before they work with the student. The plan should be kept in the office, with duplicate copies with each teacher working with that student. The objective of the plan is that all staff working with the student are aware of and committed to using positive behaviour support strategies to create and maintain a safe learning environment for the student, other students and school staff.

Parent involvement

It is important that parents are aware of this plan and are supportive of the proactive strategies, preplanned consequences and crisis management plan. Ideally, the development of a support plan is a collaborative effort between parents and school staff.

Sample Individual Behaviour Support Plan

Re: Sonny (13 years old, Grade 7)

Objective of plan

Staff working with Sonny will be aware of and committed to using behaviour support procedures to maintain a safe environment for Sonny, other students and staff.

Key understandings about Sonny

(Functions of problem behaviour)

- Academic pressures increase Sonny's anxiety—he sometimes gets physically aggressive to avoid certain academic tasks, especially in math.
- Sonny often feels that peers are teasing or rejecting him—he sometimes gets physically aggressive to avoid what he perceives as peer rejection.
- Sonny wants to have friends and be respected for his vast knowledge of video games and computers.

Plan

1. Staff working with Sonny will read and sign this plan.
2. Be aware of **antecedent events**. Problem behaviour is most likely to occur when:
 - Sonny is presented with a new assignment, especially in math
 - Sonny thinks other students are making fun of him or rejecting him
 - Sonny misunderstands or overreacts to other students' casual comments.
3. Be aware of **warning signs** that problem behaviour may escalate.
 - Sonny starts talking to himself.
 - Sonny approaches the student he believes is making fun of him or rejecting him.
 - Sonny reaches for a desk or another piece of furniture.
4. Immediate **plans to defuse** the situation
 - Give Sonny a problem-solving card with calm-down choices (e.g., breathe deeply, go get a drink, don't react).
 - If necessary, ask other students to quietly leave the area.
 - Once Sonny has calmed down, he will outline a plan for upcoming activities, with assistance from a staff member.

5. **Positive behaviour supports** throughout the school year

- Before asking Sonny to carry out a new activity independently, give him the opportunity to successfully practise it in a group setting or with a peer.
- To ensure success, give Sonny structured assignments (e.g., with completed sample, cue cards, reduced number of questions required), particularly in math and when longer writing assignments are required.
- Work with Sonny each week to set personal goals re: completing assignments, getting along with peers. Review progress at the end of each week.
- Select, teach and practise problem-solving strategies. Record them on a cue card for easy reference.
- Select, teach and practise calm-down strategies. Record them on a cue card for easy reference.
- Help Sonny to write a social story dealing with teasing (or perceived teasing).
- Provide verbal praise privately when Sonny uses calm-down strategies.
- Look for opportunities for Sonny to share the computer games and programs he creates with other students.
- Send home weekly good news e-mails describing Sonny's recent successes.

6. Help **peers learn** to:

- understand that Sonny may not always understand their intentions
- reduce joking and teasing that can be misinterpreted
- include Sonny in their activities.

7. Staff will provide **additional support** by:

- incorporating guided practice in calm-down strategies and problem solving for all students across the subject areas and throughout the school day
- encouraging Sonny to join school computer club and providing informal coaching to help him create and maintain positive relationships with peers in this social setting.

Crisis Management Plan. If aggressive or unsafe behaviour occurs in spite of proactive strategies, the school plan is to:

- Ask Sonny to leave the classroom and go to Ms. R's room. An adult walks with him.
- If he refuses to leave, hold up the red card and quietly ask the other students to pick up their materials and go to another area (e.g., the library).
- Have Sonny stay in Miss R's room until he calms down.
- Once he is calm, ask Sonny to express his feelings about the incident through drawing. With assistance, Sonny identifies another way of dealing with similar incidents in the future (by choosing one of his problem-solving strategies).
- Notify Sonny's parents of unsafe incidents. (Mom's cell number is 222-2222.)

I have read this plan and commit to using these supports when working with **Sonny**.

Team members' signatures

Date

Review date

Developing an individual behaviour support plan takes a team effort and should be done at the beginning of each school year or shortly after a student has been identified as needing a support plan.

Key understandings

Begin the planning process by identifying at least three key behaviours that significantly impact this student's school success. Use data from the functional behavioural assessment to describe typical problem behaviours, and the typical functions of these behaviours. In addition, identify at least one positive or strength-based behaviour. These behaviours will be the focus of the plan.

Consider the types of problem behaviours that might be targetted from the following lists.

Internalizing behaviours

- Anxiety
 - worries incessantly
 - is nervous
 - is fearful
 - avoids tasks or situations
- Depression
 - cries easily
 - is easily upset
 - is pessimistic
- Somatization (illness related to psychological distress)
 - has headaches and/or stomach aches
 - complains of general pain or fatigue
- Withdrawal
 - refuses to talk or join in group activities
 - avoids others
- Inattention
 - has a short attention span
 - is easily distracted
 - does not complete tasks

Externalizing behaviours

- Anger control
 - has temper outbursts or “explosions”
 - is unable to regulate emotions
- Aggression
 - teases others
 - threatens others
 - swears at or is rude to others
 - breaks others' things
 - physically hurts others

- Hyperactivity/impulsivity
 - is excitable
 - is restless or overactive
 - talks excessively
 - interrupts others
 - cannot wait to take turns
- Oppositional behaviour
 - argues
 - disrupts the play of others
 - annoys others on purpose
 - refuses to follow directions or respond to requests
 - breaks rules, including lying and stealing

The list above does not identify the reasons for specific behaviours. For example, a student may not be completing tasks for a variety of reasons, including inattention, oppositional behaviour or anxiety. To identify functions of these behaviours, use data gathered from a functional behavioural assessment (FBA). (For more information on FBA, see pages 39 to 45).

Determine priorities

Students with behaviour disabilities often display several challenging behaviours, and many of them urgently need to be addressed. If a behaviour support plan attempts to address too many challenging behaviours at once, the plan becomes too complex and unwieldy, and it ultimately fails. Even when only one or two behaviours are targeted for change in the individualized program plan (IPP) and behaviour support plan, school staff continue to address the other behaviours through regular rules and routines.

Begin by choosing **one** behaviour of concern as the target for intervention in the behaviour support plan. This choice often depends on factors such as the impact of that behaviour on the student's:

- well-being and the well-being of others. Behaviours that place the student at risk or other staff or students at risk, must be addressed first
- participation and learning
- relationships with other students and teachers
- ability to learn in the classroom.

Another factor to consider in choosing the target behaviour is the likelihood of success over the short term; for example, within three months. Once students have had success in one area, they can build on that success and systematically address other problem behaviours. Parents can often participate in the identification of priority behaviours.

Identify function of behaviour

When priority behaviours have been identified, use data from a functional behavioural analysis to determine the function or purpose of each type of problem behaviour. Include a description of the function in the “Key understandings” section of the plan.

Antecedents, warning signs and plans for defusing

Use data gathered about this student’s behaviour to identify antecedents or contexts in which the problem behaviour is most likely to occur. This will give staff working with the student a better idea of how they might structure situations to prevent problem behaviour and encourage positive behaviour.

Identifying warning signs that the student is beginning to experience difficulty can help staff be aware of what to look for in the classroom in order to defuse potentially problematic situations. Having a plan in place to defuse situations will give staff confidence to act proactively and will help students better understand their role in managing their own behaviour.

Positive supports

Identifying positive supports for a student is the most important part of an individual behaviour support plan. Identifying proactive strategies that staff can use to help the student develop and maintain positive behaviours to replace problem behaviours is key.

This section of the plan also identifies specific skills and concepts that need to be taught, practised and reinforced, and the specific type of reinforcers that are effective for this student. These supports should be in place across school environments and throughout the school year.

Role of peers

The choice of a target problem behaviour in the plan is also determined by the impact the behaviour is having on other students.

Consider whether the behaviour is affecting their:

- ability to learn
- participation in the class
- stress level in class (e.g., feeling of safety)
- tendency to imitate the negative behaviour.

In inclusive settings, staff must find ways to implement plans that do not stigmatize students with behaviour disabilities but also do not disrupt the learning or compromise the safety or well-being of other students.

Peers can support positive behaviour when they understand what they can do to help. Classroom behaviour expectations that support inclusive and supportive behaviour (such as including others or not engaging in teasing or bullying) can also create a supportive structure in which peers model positive behaviour and effective social skills.

Additional support

This part of the plan identifies other opportunities staff can use to model, teach and support positive behaviour throughout the school day. Many of these proactive strategies will benefit all students, not only students with behaviour disabilities.

Crisis management plan

Although the goal is to prevent a crisis from ever occurring, recognize that some students with behaviour disabilities may occasionally become very agitated. In such cases, the behaviour support plan for that individual student becomes a crisis management tool. All staff working with the student, and perhaps other students in the class, need to be aware of and understand this crisis management plan, which ideally has been developed by the whole planning team, including parents.

The main focus of the plan is identifying steps for decreasing the likelihood that the problem behaviour will occur, but there needs to be a plan in place in the event that the interventions are not effective.

If a behaviour escalates and requires this alternate plan, the team needs to revisit the behaviour support plan as soon as possible to adjust the level and type of individualized intervention.

Physical intervention

Physical intervention is a crisis management technique, not a strategy for managing behaviour. Physical interventions are not designed to reduce the frequency or severity of negative behaviours but rather to ensure the students' safety.

Consequently, these interventions are used only in emergencies. Teachers need to consult with administrators to determine which interventions are approved for use in their jurisdiction, what training is available and what documentation, including communication with parents, is required. Only staff who have received specific training should attempt physical interventions. The goal should always be to

increase and improve proactive behaviour interventions so physical intervention is never necessary.

Jurisdiction-wide crisis management protocols

A number of Alberta school jurisdictions have developed a risk threat assessment protocol that assists school personnel in identifying students who may have suicidal or homicidal intentions. One of the goals of threat assessment protocol is that adults react appropriately—neither overreact or underreact—to problem behaviours.

Protocols generally involve a multidisciplinary team using a set of guiding questions to assess the risk a student poses.



For more information on threat assessment protocols, see <http://www.cctatr.com/index.htm>.

Ideally, the crisis management plan section in a student’s individual behaviour support plan would align with the jurisdiction protocol developed for all students. However, depending on the specific terms of the jurisdiction protocol, and the developmental needs of the individual student with behaviour disabilities, the intervention most appropriate and effective with that student might be slightly different.

Individualized program plans

An individualized program plan (IPP) for a student with behaviour disabilities should include three to five goals related to behaviours that interfere with or present a barrier to the student’s learning or the learning of other students. The individual behaviour support plan outlines ways to act on and support the behaviour goals identified in the IPP.

Alberta Education’s *Standards for Special Education, Amended June 2004*, require that IPPs contain the following essential information:

- assessment data (diagnostic assessment data used to determine special education programming and services)
- current level of performance and achievement
- strengths and areas of need
- measurable goals and objectives
- procedures for evaluating student progress
- identification of coordinated support services
- relevant medical information

- required classroom accommodations
- transition plans
- information about formal review of progress at regularly scheduled reporting periods
- year-end summary
- parents' signatures to indicate agreement with the plan.



For more information, see Alberta Education's *Individualized Program Planning* (2005) available at <https://education.alberta.ca/media/384992/individualized-program-planning-2006.pdf>.