

A PEATC

Do You Know....



Factsheet for Virginia's Parents Supporting Positive Behavior in Young Children

How do I Improve my Child's Behavior at Home and in School?

Addressing challenging behavior in a positive manner brings results. Strategies for young children will be different than those for older children, but families and schools, including preschool, benefit from using the nationally recognized approach called **Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)**. **PBIS** is an approach to **resolving challenging or disruptive behaviors** that recognizes that behavior is communication. It can be used at home and in school. PBIS focuses on **prevention vs. punishment** and **replacement of problem behaviors** with more appropriate actions and means of communication.

If your child **receives special education and related services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP)**, and if his/her behavior impedes their learning or that of others, **the IEP team must consider the use of positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address the behavior.**

Benefits of Positive Behavioral Intervention for Young Children

Young children benefit from clear expectations and some children need more help to learn appropriate behavior. The strategies in **PBIS are designed to help families and schools solve problems and help children learn appropriate ways to communicate** that will enable them to get their message across. For PBIS to work, you (and your IEP team) must (1) **identify the cause** of the behavior (*e.g., Mary hits herself when she is tired*); (2) **develop replacement strategies** (*e.g., teach Mary to communicate how she is feeling and consider ending activities sooner*); (3) **implement the strategies consistently** (*at home and in school*); (4) **monitor progress and reassess** if no improvement is seen (*You may have misidentified the cause of the behavior or different strategies may be needed.*)

Positive behavioral interventions, will help your child improve their **communications and social skills**, improve the **quality of family life**, and increase their ability to **learn in the classroom and participate in the community**. It is much more effective than punishment because it recognizes that **your child's intent is not to misbehave but to tell you something they can't otherwise communicate.**

Resources on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports

Early Childhood PBIS

www.pbis.org/topics/early-childhood-pbis

PBIS-What You Need to Know, Understood.org

www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/pbis-how-schools-support-positive-behavior

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>

Association for Positive Behavior Support

www.apbs.org/about/families

www.apbs.org/archives/new_apbs/early-childhood

Contact Us:

403 Holiday Court, Suite 104
Warrenton, VA 20186

800-869-6782 / 703-923-0010

www.peatc.org

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Factsheet for Virginia's Parents

Using Positive Words

When implementing positive interventions, it is important to be **direct with your child**, **ensure that your expectations are appropriate to your child's age** (e.g., you can't expect a 2-year old to sit still for an hour), and **tell your child what you want her to do vs. what you don't want her to do**. Here are a few simple examples:

- Instead of "don't run" say "walk."
- Instead of "don't yell" say, "use your quiet voice" or "your inside voice."
- Instead of "don't pull the cat's tail", say, "soft pets" or "pet the cat gently."

Case Example

Janie is 3 years old. She has Autism and limited language skills. She is enrolled in preschool and has an IEP. **Janie doesn't like to stop activities that she enjoys.** When this happens, Janie tantrums (**she lays on the ground, screams, kicks her legs and has tried to bite her mom.**) Janie's mom either gives her what she wants, which rewards her negative behavior, or sends her to her room for a "time out", which gives Janie an escape from the situation. While she calms down, the behavior does not change.

Janie's preschool teachers are also seeing this behavior. Her IEP team meets and, after completing a **Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)**¹, they develop a **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)**. Janie is given a **daily visual schedule** so she knows in advance when an activity will end and what comes next. She is given **picture cards that represent her emotions**, so she can easily let the teacher know how she feels. Janie's teacher and mom let her know in advance that she will get to do the activity (play with a toy, etc.) until a timer goes off. **They also give her a 5-minute warning** before the timer goes off. Janie's mom is given a copy of the emotion cards and develops a schedule for home use. **Janie's day becomes more predictable, and she is better able to communicate her feelings.** Her tantrums decrease, her communication improves, and she can play and share with her peers. Eventually, the schedule works on its own and Janie doesn't need the timer.

¹Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) is a study of the behavior that will help assess what happens before, during, and after the unwanted behavior.

Tips for Parents of Young Children with Challenging Behavior

Source: Positive Solutions for Families, Eight Practical Tips for Parents of Young Children with Challenging Behavior, Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children - <https://bit.ly/32Nptm8>

- **Keep your expectations realistic** (*Understand your child's abilities/limitations*)
- **Plan ahead** (*Hope for the best; have a back-up plan*)
- **State expectations in advance** (*Be clear on what you want your child to do*)
- **Offer limited, reasonable choices** (*Two options is sufficient so your child is not overwhelmed*)
- **Use If...then statements** (*If you pick up your toys, then you can go outside*)
- **Catch your child being good** (*Reinforce positive behavior*)
- **Stay calm** (*You are your child's role model*)
- **Use neutral time** (*Don't talk about behavior in the heat of the moment. Wait until you and your child are calm and able to think and listen.*)

PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

For more information about us, please contact:

403 Holiday Court, Suite 104, Warrenton, VA 20186
800-869-6782 / 703-923-0010
www.peatc.org



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