Unit 6 DB Lecture:

Welcome to our Unit 6 Discussion Board lecture! Our topic in this unit will be another intervention that can be used to change behaviors in organizations, staff training. There are many ways to approach training staff; however, just as we have with every component of creating successful organizations, we will focus only on evidence-based methods.

First, before even considering staff training as an intervention, let’s refresh our memories of the problem-solving model. Remember that a key part of this process is to pinpoint the behaviors and results needed for the organization. During this step, we also gather more information on the problem, which will lead us to the most appropriate solutions. Often in organizations, staff training is selected as an intervention and implemented before gaining a full understanding of the problem. This means that resources and time could be spent on a staff training interventions when there are other underlying issues, such as reinforcement, that could play a role in staff behavior. So, before selecting staff training as an intervention, ensure that there is, in fact, a need for staff training due to skill deficits, and do not forget to consider other potential factors that could be impacting staff performance.

Once a determination is made that staff training is needed to improve staff performance, it is important to select the best method of staff training to produce the target behaviors. Using a behavior analytic approach requires that staff training methods should be evidence-based and have demonstrated effectiveness. Some of the more traditional methods of training are modeled after the US model for education. Some instruction is provided in a classroom where questions are asked. Some actual practice opportunities may be provided during the training class, and a test or assignment is given to test knowledge. If the staff members are able to pass the assessment, they are considered trained and sent out to do their jobs. In the business world, this is referred to as “on the job training” in which skills related to a job are taught in the classroom or as an individual begins a job. This typical model has been demonstrated to be inefficient and does not necessarily lead to high rates of skill acquisition and performance by staff.

Behavior analytic methods of training differ from the traditional educational approach. Some of the components in behavior analytic training models include feedback, reinforcement, and scripted presentation of material. One model that has demonstrated effectiveness for instruction is the Morningside model. This model incorporates all the components just mentioned and adds a measure of fluency. Essentially, fluency is a measurement of speed and accuracy. When a behavior occurs fluently, it tends to stay in a performer’s repertoire longer and he or she tends to be more proficient at completing the tasks. Although this method has sometimes been criticized for producing rote responding when paired with positive reinforcement, it leads to better outcomes and maintenance of skills over the long term.

The goal of staff training in most agencies is to ensure that staff members are able to complete their work tasks efficiently and effectively; therefore, their training should be geared towards this goal. Additionally, in behavior analytic staff training, the passage of time does not signal the completion of training; rather, a demonstration of competency is required for completion. One effective method for staff training is referred to as behavior skills training, or BST. This model involves instructions, modeling, practice, and feedback.

In the instructions phase of the BST model, staff members are provided with a clear description of the skill to be demonstrated and instructions for how to demonstrate this skill. In the next phase, a skilled performer demonstrates this skill for the learner. The learner is then given the opportunity to practice this skill via role-play or in a real-life situation. After some practice opportunities, the learner is provided with feedback. This process continues until the performer demonstrates competency across all required skill areas and no longer requires feedback. A tool that can be utilized during instruction and evaluation is a competency checklist that lists the necessary skills related to staff performance, allowing the performer to see the skills required and allowing the supervisor to collect data and mark the staff member on performance in key areas. Using a checklist makes the required behavior, and subsequent data related to competency, clear to all relevant parties.

There are many considerations when completing training in the real world, as the format and the availability of the supervisor may vary. One way to address the need for practice when there is limited availability of trainers is to use role-play for staff to demonstrate competency. This allows for practice of the skills in a controlled environment and can be used in a group-training situation to allow multiple performers to demonstrate competency without requiring a large amount of time commitment for the organization. The use of technology, such as computer-based training programs and videos, is also a great addition to a staff-training plan and ensures that skills can be taught in a flexible, but effective, manner. An important consideration when using technology for an aspect of training is to ensure the staff are still given sufficient opportunities to practice the target skills and receive feedback.

Remember, staff training does not end at the conclusion of a training program or staff development day; staff performance needs to be monitored over time to ensure staff members maintain performance standards. One way this can be measured is through the use of inter-observer agreement, or IOA. IOA measures the extent to which two observers agree on the occurrence and nonoccurrence of behavior. There are many different ways to calculate IOA, with the most accurate format being exact count per interval. A score of 80% agreement or better is typically termed “acceptable.”

IOA can be incorporated in the evaluation of staff training in a variety of ways. For example, when evaluating staff performance, more than one supervisor or peer could be asked to collect data on the staff behavior, and then that data can be compared to ensure that the evaluator has an accurate picture of staff performance. IOA can also be utilized during training to ensure the trainee fully understands the information. For example, in a human service agency, if a staff member is given an operational definition of a target behavior, the supervisor could conduct a practice activity in which the trainee and the supervisor collect data on the target behavior to see if there is IOA. If they do not agree on the occurrence and nonoccurrence of the target behavior, retraining may be needed.

Thank you for viewing our Unit 6 Discussion Board lecture on staff training!