

Question:

Now that insurance no longer covers my clients' school-based services, how can I support teachers and school providers in implementing a behavioral protocol without the assistance of a paraprofessional?

Answer:

This has been a challenging shift for teachers, Bcba's and their clients, but there are still many impactful ways to support teachers and school providers in implementing behavioral protocols without a paraprofessional. Here are some strategies to consider:

1. Antecedent Interventions:

- Adjust the environment to prevent challenging behaviors.
- **Examples:** structured routines, visual schedules, clear expectations, seating arrangements.
- **Practical tip:** Have your client sit near a door for easy access to breaks or place them near the board/teacher to help them focus and earn more reinforcement for appropriate behavior.

Create simple plans for teachers to implement

- **Break it down into manageable steps:** Create a simplified version of the protocol that teachers can realistically implement during busy school days and large classroom settings. Remember they don't have a 1:1 ratio with your client, and cannot run a timer or an individual token economy with them.
- **Use visual aids:** Use visual aids: Visual schedules on a client's desk or in a folder can support those who have difficulty with transitioning. Charts, cue cards, or small printouts help both staff and students follow steps independently.
- **Practical tip:** A keychain with a list of items a client should take home every day can be attached to their knapsack. Refer to LessonPix to use pictures if students are not on a reading level.

Build Tools for Independence

- **Self-monitoring systems:** Help students track their own behavior with checklists or point systems. Teach students to track their own behavior using checklists or rating scales.
- This helps build independence and accountability.
- Inform the client that you will be in touch with the teacher about their behavior so they know they are accountable. A reinforcement system can still be implemented with this method, earning weekly or monthly reinforcement at their level.
- **Practical Tip:** Have the teacher/and client rate the client's daily, or weekly behavior on a scale from 1-4 (with 4 being the highest), and have the client cash in on the points earned with your discretion.

Use Data Lightly but Effectively

- **Simple tracking sheets:** Design quick, low-effort tools for teachers to record behavior trends.
- Briefly explain Behavior-Specific Praise
- Reinforce desired behaviors with specific, positive feedback.

- **Example:** “I love how you raised your hand before speaking!”
- **Focus on key behaviors:** Prioritize tracking the most impactful behaviors to reduce burden.
- **Practical Tip:** Putting 3-4 small discrete items/tokens on the client's desk, and every time the client engages in the maladaptive behavior you are targeting, the teacher removes one item without giving any attention to the client. Based on how many items are left on the desk the reinforcement is given to the client at the end of the period/day. This way the client can redirect their behaviors without receiving positive reinforcement (through) reprimands for misbehavior.

Collaborate Creatively/ Behavior Contracts

- Sending in a written agreement that you create between your student and teacher outlining expectations and rewards can help build positive behaviors in a classroom setting. If appropriate have all the parties involved sign the contract to add accountability
- **Leverage existing roles:** “Collaborate with school counselors, social workers, and related service providers, as required. Additionally, consider engaging lunch, recess, carpool, and dismissal staff to help reinforce key components of the behavioral protocol throughout the school day.”
- **Practical tip:** provide your client with simple card games based on their age and functioning level so they can initiate play and conversation with peers during those unstructured times like recess/dismissal
- **Ex:** Spot It, Top Trumps, Uno, Monopoly Deal, Cover Your Assets- these are lightweight and inexpensive ideas for them to carry in a designated zipper pocket in their knapsack. Consider labeling the games just in case it gets lost or left behind.
- **Create a behavior support team:** Even without a para, a small group of staff can share responsibilities for implementation.
- **Practical tip:** See if an assistant is willing to redirect or assist your client when necessary. If the teacher allows it can be helpful for them to give extra gestural prompts, reinforcement or redirection when needed.

Keep Communication Flowing

- **Regular check-ins:** Schedule brief weekly updates with teachers to troubleshoot and adjust. Ask them if there is anything you can help with regarding providing more materials, tangible reinforcement that you can provide
- **Practical tip:** Ask the teacher if they prefer a text or phone call and how often so you don't present as overbearing for them
- **Celebrate wins:** Highlight progress to keep morale high and reinforce the value of the protocol.
- **Practical tip:** Use tickets, tokens, or tangibles based on the client's preference assessment- WHICH SHOULD BE DONE FREQUENTLY TO MAINTAIN MOTIVATION.