

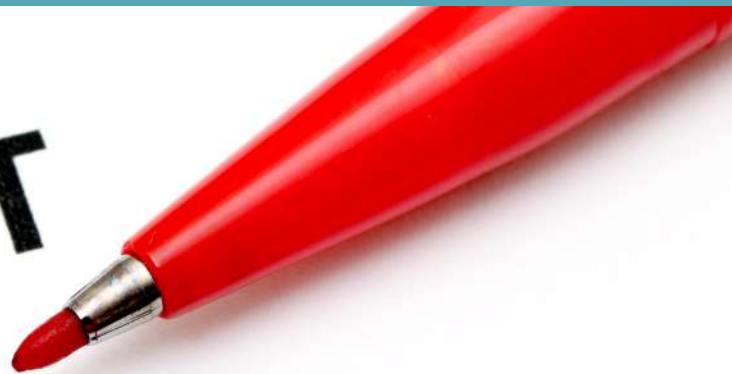


Affordable ABA  
MOCK EXAMS

# Ethics for Behavioral Analysts

RIGHT

WRONG

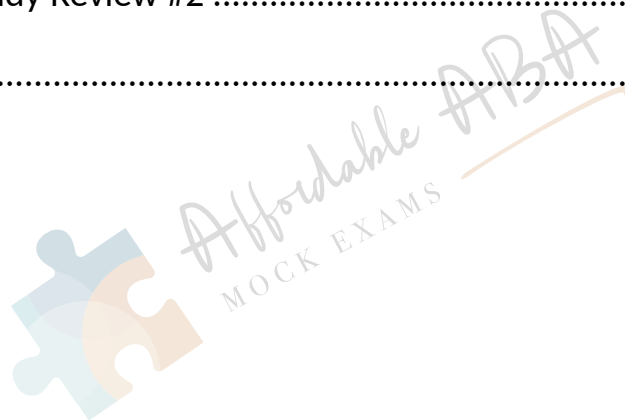


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## Introduction

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) intervention methods have been empirically researched for more than 50 years. Clinically, these intervention methods have been implemented with individuals with varying disabilities as well as individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Although there is an insurmountable wealth of evidence to support these intervention methods, ethical concerns continue to rise and be expressed regarding possible harm that could occur from the procedures and goals being implemented or even mere discontent as to the historical progression that has provided the basis for ABA-based interventions. Therefore, it is continually necessary and vital that behavior analysts are focusing on ethical considerations when developing and implementing treatment to individuals with disabilities.

## Section 1: Concerns Regarding ABA-based Interventions

### Socially Significant Behaviors and Interventions

Throughout the years, concerns have been noted regarding goals that are being addressed for individuals with disabilities and the need for evaluating the social significance of the interventions being used. It has been thought that ABA-based interventions do not consider the thoughts of the individual receiving the treatment, and instead goals are created based on what others outside of the individual viewed as important. Furthermore, it has been believed that the transformation in behaviors was a violation of an individual's autonomy, overriding the individual's natural instincts by using coercive manners to create behavior change (Wilkenfeld & McCarthy, 2020).

Therefore, it is important to listen to the judgments of the clients and to uphold their rights and dignity when developing plans for implementation. Goals that are outlined in treatment should be based on the importance of that goal for the individual receiving treatment. When evaluating the literature on goal creation and behavior change strategies, it is important to outline the criterion used to guide development: social significance of the goal, context of habilitation, access to other environments, predisposition for interaction from others, alignment of replacement behaviors, and age-appropriateness of goal. This criterion provides a thorough basis for behavior change strategies and goal creation that involves the individual being affected by the treatment.

ABA-based treatment interventions are evidence based methods that apply behavior analytic principles in an effort to improve socially significant behaviors. A socially significant behavior has both immediate and long term effects for the individual that engages in the behavior. Ideally, behavior that is socially significant can vary from one individual to another- vastly differing by someone's age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and culture. An example of socially significant behaviors could be learning to brush your teeth, eating with a fork, or greeting others when they greet you. It is important for these behaviors to be relevant to social relationships, allow the individual to access reinforcement in an appropriate and acceptable manner, and be seen as an important aspect to the individual's life. The person that is being affected by the treatment and the behavior will need to evaluate if it is an important problem to address. For example, if an individual is engaging in motor stereotypy (i.e., hand flapping), the behavior itself might not be interfering with learning or the individual might feel that it does not disadvantage them from engaging in social relationships. If this is the case, then this behavior might not be of importance to the individual to change, and a different goal could be prioritized for acquisition. However, if the exhibition of motor stereotypy interferes with learning or the individual finds the behavior stigmatizing, then the behavior may be of importance for them to want to change and may seek out an intervention that allows for a decrease in this behavior.

Behavior change should be considered in the context of habilitation, evaluating the degree to which this individual's repertoire is able to maximize both short and long term reinforcers and also minimize both short and long term punishers for the individual (Hawkins, 1984). Outcomes should be delineated in measurable terms, applicable to a diverse group of activities, and be culturally and situationally relevant to the individual. By meeting this criteria, the individual is more likely to obtain additional reinforcers in the future and be able to avoid potential punishers. An individual diagnosed with ASD may find navigating social cues as frustrating, leading them to avoid social situations and community events. Working on goals to learn social cues may be of value as this could assist individuals with coming in contact with others that can provide them with valuable social interactions for access to things in their environment, lasting friendships, or even knowledge of information needed to complete a task. Learning these social cues may allow the individual to maximize their access to both short and long term reinforcers while limiting their contact with short and long term punishers in these social situations. This could enable the individual to possibly have more positive social interactions and build a repertoire of social cues.

Furthermore, behaviors that are included in treatment should be evaluated based on if learning the behavior will result in access to other environments where other behaviors can be learned and even used (Cooper et al., 2020). By providing these indirect benefits to an individual, it allows an individual access to other environments that they may have not been able to access previously. For example, teaching students in a special education environment to stay seated when doing work, to raise their hand when they have a question, and to complete their assigned work will not only assist with their personal progress but these skills that are taught will also help with their adaptation into other school environments. This may allow the individual the ability to eventually reduce additional supports, provide a foundation for access to other peer groups, and build on a repertoire of skills that will further enhance learning experiences in other environments.

Additionally, each behavior should be evaluated based on if it will predispose others to interact with this individual in a more appropriate and acceptable manner (Cooper et al., 2020). Often, individuals with disabilities do not engage in sustained eye contact with others. When creating a plan that revolves around this goal, it is important to understand if maintaining eye contact for the individual is of importance to them. Typically, it is important to align one's body with the individual that is speaking to show that one is listening. In most cultures, this is a social norm. However, maintaining eye contact for a period of time may be uncomfortable for some, even those without a disability. The individual should be allowed to decide to what extent they would like to engage in this behavior and the assistance required to learn this skill.

An adaptive behavior should also be aligned to replace a behavior that is being eliminated or reduced (Cooper et al., 2020). When a clinician is designing a plan for an individual with a disability, it should be noted that a behavior should never be reduced or eliminated without an adaptive behavior being targeted for instruction that will replace the behavior. A positive and adaptive repertoire should be designed for the individual affected by treatment. Although an individual's behavior may be annoying or disruptive to others, it has allowed the individual to meet a need. This need could be to communicate a want, express that they no longer want to take part in an activity, or even that they are uncomfortable in a situation. These undesirable responses have been functional for the individual and have helped the individual to avoid punishers and even to produce reinforcers. A child that engages in tantrum behavior while at the grocery store may have exhibited this behavior previously when asking for a candy bar, and the parent provided them the candy bar as a way to get the child to calm down. Therefore, the child has learned in this example that they will more than likely obtain a candy bar (or any item they ask for) if they engage in tantrum behavior. Although this behavior may



be disruptive, it has met a need for the child. When working to reduce the exhibition of this tantrum behavior, it is important to teach a replacement behavior, such as requesting the candy bar by gaining the attention of the parent and asking with a calm body, so that a functional response replaces the behavior targeted for decrease.

Lastly, the behavior should also be evaluated as to if it is age-appropriate for the individual or not. A child that is 3-4 years of age should not be expected to be able to discuss their emotions about an event at a higher level of thinking than their age or be required to be highly articulate when retelling events. It is important to maintain goals that are age-appropriate and allow the individual to engage at their age level. The principle known as normalization, refers to establishing behaviors that are as culturally normal as possible (Cooper et al., 2020). It works to integrate individuals with disabilities into mainstream society by guiding the selection of age-appropriate goals so that an individual has an increased opportunity for interacting with peer groups and learning other adaptive behaviors that are more functional for that individual. This principle guides goal creation and behavior change for individuals with disabilities and allows for the focus to be on the individual, their needs, and what is of importance to them.

## **Discussion of Applicable Ethics Codes**

Behavior analysts work in a variety of environments to deliver ABA-based services as a means of positively impacting the lives of others. The Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) works as the governing body to not only meet the credentialing needs of professionals in the field but to also ensure that consumers are protected by maintaining professional standards that are to be adhered to. The Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts serves as a set of guidelines that behavior analysts are to use to evaluate their own behavior and for others to use to determine if a behavior analyst has violated any ethical obligations in their practice (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020).

Per the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts, there are several ethical standards that should be reviewed and applied when formulating intervention methods for individuals with disabilities and evaluating the social significance of goal development (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020).

### **2.09 Involving Clients and Stakeholders**

*Behavior analysts make appropriate efforts to involve clients and relevant stakeholders throughout the service relationship, including selecting goals, selecting and designing*

assessments and behavior-change interventions, and conducting continual progress monitoring.

## **2.14 Selecting, Designing, and Implementing Behavior-Change Interventions**

*Behavior analysts select, design, and implement behavior-change interventions that: (1) are conceptually consistent with behavioral principles; (2) are based on scientific evidence; (3) are based on assessment results; (4) prioritize positive reinforcement procedures; and (5) best meet the diverse needs, context, and resources of the client and stakeholders. Behavior analysts also consider relevant factors (e.g., risks, benefits, and side effects; client and stakeholder preference; implementation efficiency; cost effectiveness) and design and implement behavior-change interventions to produce outcomes likely to maintain under naturalistic conditions. They summarize the behavior-change intervention procedures in writing (e.g., a behavior plan).*

### **3.01 Responsibility to Clients**

*Behavior analysts act in the best interest of clients, taking appropriate steps to support clients' rights, maximize benefits, and do no harm. They are also knowledgeable about and comply with applicable laws and regulations related to mandated reporting requirements.*

In order to determine the social validity of a behavior change intervention or development of a goal, a behavior analyst should focus on three main points: the social significance of the goal, the procedures and techniques are acceptable to the individual affected by the treatment, and that the magnitude of the outcomes is socially important (Contreras et al., 2022). Per the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts, these codes instill that the targets identified for change are meaningful to the client and stakeholders, that the procedures and methods selected for use are acceptable to the client being affected by the treatment, and that the change in the behavior is meaningful to the client (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). While a decrease in a behavior is appropriate in a behavior-change intervention, if a client is still exhibiting distress or is not happy with the results of the intervention, then the magnitude of change is not meaningful (Contreras et al., 2022).

Additionally, behavior analysts should identify potential sources of evidence to use when developing behavior change interventions. Research articles, individual client history, and meta-analyses should be taken into consideration and incorporated into a given

intervention. It is important to thoroughly understand a client's history so that previous interventions and their level of success can be evaluated in an attempt to formulate an intervention that will be effective. Once potential sources of evidence have been reviewed, the implementation of treatment based on this evidence can commence. Ongoing progress monitoring that identifies that the treatment is effective and produces socially valid improvements in the individual's behavior is a key component of any intervention (Contreras et al., 2022).

## **Ivar Lovaas and the UCLA Young Autism Project (YAP)**

Prior to the UCLA YAP and the teaching of Lovaas, commonly held beliefs were that individuals with disabilities were defined by their disability and would never be able to change, learn, or succeed within their community. Individuals that were confined to institutions would never be able to live on their own, engage in social dialogue with others, or build meaningful relationships within their community. Treatment interventions were not common at the time of the UCLA YAP that successfully decreased high magnitude behaviors or increased prosocial behavior. Individuals were commonly placed in mechanical or physical restraints to help alleviate behaviors and to keep individuals safe. However, individuals also received significant injury during this time as a result of being in extended restraints, unable to breathe, and exposed to inhumane treatment.

The UCLA YAP was based on an applied behavior analytic intervention that took place in the 1970s, designed for preschool children that were diagnosed with ASD. The treatment used was based on Lovaas' teachings that consisted of one-to-one therapy for approximately 40 hours per week over the course of 2-3 years. Immediate gains in adaptive skills such as language and decreases in problem behavior (i.e., aggression, self-harm) were seen; however, long-term progress was poor and most children that underwent treatment during this time reverted back to pre-treatment functioning levels (Shull, 2013).

Concerns during Lovaas' time were centered around the use of electric shock to change behavior. Electric shock was not used for routine behavior management or reduction techniques, but instead, used for treating self-injurious behaviors that were life threatening. At the time, interventions were sought out that delivered rapid and immediate change in behavior due to the circumstances that surrounded the behaviors being exhibited. Lovaas prescribed shock at precise intensity levels and during brief moments, leading this to be the primary choice of intervention techniques at that time.

Often, behavior reduction strategies that focus on the reduction of challenging behavior are based on differential reinforcement schedules (Nicolosi et al., 2021). Early insight into the UCLA YAP focused on criticizing the use of positive punishment procedures. When looking back on this research and compared to present day research, it is understandable that the UCLA YAP has received insurmountable criticism for the procedures used. However, when evaluating the research based on the time period that the research was conducted and taking into consideration this historical context, it is also important to note that during this same time frame, corporal punishment was also being used and common in educational settings. The use of caning was often prevalent in school settings. Later, though, the use of corporal punishment was outlawed in countries as a result of changing cultural values and practices (Nicolosi et al., 2021).

As time progressed in the UCLA YAP, electric shock was replaced by spanking and different punishment techniques; however, it was found that individuals contacted reinforcement procedures more often than punishment procedures. By the end of YAP, it was found that reinforcing contingencies were contacted in relation to punishing contingencies at a ratio of 100:1, with physical punishment no longer being used (Leaf & McEachin, 2016). Although the techniques demonstrated during the period of YAP and by Lovaas are outdated and thought of as being controversial, research has continued to move forward and expand the field of ABA-based services.

Recent research has found that the UCLA YAP is embedded with motivational systems, using both conditioned and natural reinforcers to aid in behavior change (Nicolosi et al., 2021). The learning objectives in place for each individual are addressed through discrete trial training (DTT) and focus on the importance of being able to follow basic instructions. Procedures that use positive punishment techniques are no longer included in updated revisions of the manual (Nicolosi et al., 2021). The teaching procedures that are being employed are now emphasizing the transferring of teaching procedures into a more natural context or environment. Generalization and maintenance of adaptive behaviors are being taught beyond the actual teaching sessions so that an individual can learn socially significant goals that produce high magnitude change for the individual being affected by treatment.

Although the concerns voiced regarding the treatment interventions and physical punishment that was used during Lovaas' work are accurate according to research, those concerns should not be generalized to present day ABA-based research (Leaf et al., 2021). Despite the controversialness that blankets these early techniques by Lovaas, it should not be carried over to present day ABA-based services. Data does not support

shock as a method that is commonly being used in ABA-based interventions. Although there may be a few examples (i.e, the Judge Rotenberg Center) that exist that do support the use of shock, this is an exception rather than the rule to the design that exists for ABA-based treatment interventions. It is important to note, though, that these historical events have led to the development of current ABA-based treatment interventions and the guidance and direction that is offered regarding ethical concerns by the BACB. These controversial procedures have ultimately led to the development of non-aversive/non-invasive procedures that can be used to change behavior that was once thought to only be able to be changed by aversive/invasive procedures.

Non-aversive behavior management techniques are based on the commitment that individuals with severe disabilities who present with challenging behaviors are to be treated with the same dignity and respect as other members within a community (Horner et al., 2005). These techniques take into consideration the concerns that treatment for individuals with disabilities has subjected these individuals to inhumane treatment and unethical practices by clinicians. Therefore, non-aversive behavior management techniques looks at alternative ways to change behavior using positive procedures that guide clinicians in the development of adaptive repertoires.

Within non-aversive behavior management techniques, there are nine common themes that can be found among these interventions (Horner et al., 2005). These nine themes include: an emphasis on lifestyle change, functional analysis, multicomponent interventions, manipulation of ecological and setting events, emphasis on antecedent manipulations, teaching adaptive behavior, building environments with effective consequences, minimizing the use of punishers, distinguish emergency procedures from proactive programming, and social validation and the role of dignity in behavioral support.

The personal dignity of the individual being affected by the treatment should always be maintained and supported through behavioral interventions. If a community member were to view an intervention as being excessive, then caution should be taken when discussing whether or not this intervention is appropriate and acceptable for an individual with a disability. The methods used to achieve the outcomes in any given goal should be within the standards that society has set. For example, if the goal of the individual is to teach someone to maintain eye contact, the goal should not be to maintain eye contact for excessive periods of time or throughout an entire conversation. Most societal standards do not expect individuals engaging in dialogue to continually stare into each other's eyes throughout the entire duration of the conversation.

Therefore, it is not acceptable to expect an individual with a disability to do anything different than what is set by societal standards.

Therefore, research has suggested that behavioral interventions are based on three points of criteria (Horner et al., 2005). The level of intrusiveness should be balanced with the value that the anticipated behavior change will provide for the individual being affected by treatment. The intervention should be evaluated by competent professionals that view the proposed treatment method as being the least intrusive method that can be used. Lastly, community members should be able to view the treatment method in a manner that it is not seen as dehumanizing, degrading, or even disrespectful to the individual receiving treatment.

## **Discussion of Applicable Ethics Codes**

Per the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts, there are several ethical standards that should be reviewed and applied when evaluating intervention methods for individuals with disabilities to ensure that they are in agreement with the treatment being offered and that they are being treated with the utmost respect and dignity (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020).

### **2.08 Communicating About Services**

*Behavior analysts use understandable language in, and ensure comprehension of, all communications with clients, stakeholders, supervisees, trainees, and research participants. Before providing services, they clearly describe the scope of services and specify the conditions under which services will end. They explain all assessment and behavior-change intervention procedures before implementing them and explain assessment and intervention results when they are available. They provide an accurate and current set of their credentials and a description of their area of competence upon request.*

### **2.11 Obtaining Informed Consent**

*Behavior analysts are responsible for knowing about and complying with all conditions under which they are required to obtain informed consent from clients, stakeholders, and research participants (e.g., before initial implementation of assessments or behavior-change interventions, when making substantial changes to interventions, when exchanging or releasing confidential information or records). They are responsible for*



*explaining, obtaining, reobtaining, and documenting required informed consent. They are responsible for obtaining assent from clients when applicable.*

## **2.13 Selecting, Designing, and Implementing Assessments**

*Before selecting or designing behavior-change interventions, behavior analysts select and design assessments that are conceptually consistent with behavioral principles; that are based on scientific evidence; and that best meet the diverse needs, context, and resources of the client and stakeholders. They select, design, and implement assessments with a focus on maximizing benefits and minimizing risk of harm to the client and stakeholders. They summarize the procedures and results in writing.*

## **2.15 Minimizing Risk of Behavior-Change Interventions**

*Behavior analysts select, design, and implement behavior-change interventions (including the selection and use of consequences) with a focus on minimizing risk of harm to the client and stakeholders. They recommend and implement restrictive or punishment-based procedures only after demonstrating that desired results have not been obtained using less intrusive means, or when it is determined by an existing intervention team that the risk of harm to the client outweighs the risk associated with the behavior-change intervention. When recommending and implementing restrictive or punishment-based procedures, behavior analysts comply with any required review processes (e.g., a human rights review committee). Behavior analysts must continually evaluate and document the effectiveness of restrictive or punishment-based procedures and modify or discontinue the behavior-change intervention in a timely manner if it is ineffective.*

It is ideal that a behavior analyst is equipped with strong interpersonal skills. A behavior analyst needs to be able to build rapport and trust with the individuals they are working with (i.e., clients, stakeholders, community members). This foundation of trust and rapport building allows for open and honest communication among one another and for difficult or uncomfortable situations to be able to be held with open lines of communication. These interpersonal skills allow for the values of the individual being affected by treatment to be discussed and contextual variables to be analyzed so that treatment is not only effective but also meaningful for all involved.

In an effort to maximize the outcomes for the individuals receiving treatment, it is vital that the individual understands the information that is being communicated with them. Although a behavior analyst should communicate with technological precision and

remain conceptually systematic, the individual receiving services should still receive this information in a language they understand and that is accessible to them (Contreras, 2022). Usable and understandable terms should be used to communicate with the individuals receiving treatment and the stakeholders.

Additionally, a behavior analyst's professional judgment will continually be shaped throughout their career as the analyst contacts consequences to the decisions that they make regarding treatment. It is important for an analyst to constantly refine their repertoire that they base their professional judgments on by means of a systematic and reflective process (Contreras, 2022). This allows the analyst to examine the actions that they have taken, the reasons behind the actions that they selected to engage in, and the outcomes of those actions.

An analyst should also try to reflect on this process through various perspectives (i.e., client, stakeholders) so that understanding can be developed for the basis of decisions made. This process allows an analyst to take responsibility in their practice, the decisions they make, and ensures ongoing evaluation of their practices. This reflective practice can help to ensure that risk is being minimized in behavior-change interventions.

## **One-Size Fits All Intervention**

Despite the ABA-based practices and procedures used, individualized instruction is typically emphasized when teaching communication skills, adaptive behaviors, and when working on behavior reduction techniques. This type of approach usually includes a one-to-one support that guides instruction and is often described as an intensive approach, recommending that young children attend a comprehensive program.

Oftentimes, through these comprehensive programs, a service provider will request up to 40 hours per week of intensive ABA-based intervention services for an individual diagnosed with ASD. Children as young as two years of age can be found attending clinics five days per week and receiving intensive intervention services at this intensity level. These programs are individualized to the client's characteristics and are designed to work on multiple affected developmental domains (i.e., cognitive, communicative, adaptive, social, emotional, and behavioral). Proponents raising concerns against ABA-based interventions are noted as stating that this can be too intensive of a service level for one person, harmful if provided at this level on a continual basis, and voiding a child of the opportunity of play time.



Furthermore, claims exist that proclaim that most children all start on the same lesson and receive the same consequences for their actions. It is also thought that ABA-based interventions rely on programming that is archaic, and staff are required to follow precise protocols at all times. Others believe that intensive therapy means that a child is not allowed the opportunity to play and undergoes instruction for all hours that they are in treatment, thus creating individuals that lack unique personality traits and are robotic like in their demeanor. As research continues to unfold, it is noted that these concerns have been unfounded in the published literature. Research that has been published has shown that the number of hours of ABA-based intervention services are not related to harmful or undesirable effects (Leaf et al., 2022). Instead, review of the literature indicates that the more hours of ABA-based services that can be provided at an earlier age is correlated with significant improvements across a variety of skill sets. Protocols are not the driving force behind treatment decisions and are to be used as a guide for treatment. ABA-based interventions are to be creative, individualized, and allow for improvisation as needed. Individuals are ever changing and will often respond in unique and creative ways depending on the environment. ABA-based interventions rely on this same methodology to react to individuals and to guide their learning opportunities.

Behavior analysts undergo training at different levels, from different professionals, and specialize in different areas. This degree of variability in a behavior analyst's repertoire and skill level will also impact the course of treatment for individuals with disabilities in varied ways. Training allows for the basic principles and procedures to guide intervention implementation; however, the experience that a behavior analyst undergoes provides them with the means to respond in different and creative ways when developing goals and interventions for learning opportunities.

## **Discussion of Applicable Ethics Codes**

Per the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts, there are several ethical standards that should be taken into consideration when developing comprehensive treatment packages for individuals with disabilities to ensure that the treatment they receive is individualized and continually guided by the unique experiences of their behavior analyst (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020).

### **1.06 Maintaining Competence**

*Behavior analysts actively engage in professional development activities to maintain and further their professional competence. Professional development activities include*

*reading relevant literature; attending conferences and conventions; participating in workshops and other training opportunities; obtaining additional coursework; receiving coaching, consultation, supervision, or mentorship; and obtaining and maintaining appropriate professional credentials.*

## **2.17 Collecting and Using Data**

*Behavior analysts actively ensure the appropriate selection and correct implementation of data collection procedures. They graphically display, summarize, and use the data to make decisions about continuing, modifying, or terminating services.*

## **2.18 Continual Evaluation of the Behavior-Change Intervention**

*Behavior analysts engage in continual monitoring and evaluation of behavior-change interventions. If data indicate that desired outcomes are not being realized, they actively assess the situation and take appropriate corrective action. When a behavior analyst is concerned that services concurrently delivered by another professional are negatively impacting the behavior-change intervention, the behavior analyst takes appropriate steps to review and address the issue with the other professional.*

As behavior analysts progress through their experience in the field, they should work to maintain and expand their scope of competence by continually contacting contemporary research and scholarly literature on a routine basis (Contreras et al., 2022). Research in the field should be read often and varied across a multitude of topics in the realm of behavior analysis. While this is an expectation that behavior analysts are regarded as having, there are often barriers to fulfilling this obligation.

As behavior analysts embark on their educational journeys, it is often easier to gain access to scholarly literature and the breadth of knowledge that is embedded within courses than it may be once a behavior analyst ends their educational requirements and begins working in the field. This could be due to several reasons. One particular reason is that often educational institutions will cut off access to or restrict access to literature as the behavior analyst graduates from the educational institution and no longer has access to the libraries and resources available through the institution. Although this barrier may exist, it is important for behavior analysts to develop other avenues to access the information. The BACB provides a free search engine as well as access to several journals through the certificant portal. Additionally, table of contents alerts can be set up to arrive in one's email inbox when new articles and journal issues are available online

(Briggs et al., 2021). The PsychInfo database and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) are additional options that allow for a search of behavior analytic content to be conducted throughout psychological literature. Various parameters exist within this database that allow for a more thorough search and narrowing down of the literature on a particular topic. Furthermore, behavior analysts could subscribe to a journal that they are interested in and gain access to recent research through this avenue. Networking is also an additional resource for behavior analysts to use. Behavior analysts could contact their peers in the field and request that literature be sent to them when publications are finalized. Special interest groups (SIGs), through the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI), contain members in the field with a special interest in a particular outlet of behavior analysis (Briggs et al., 2021). Contact information for these groups and their members is available as an option for networking and gaining additional resources on a topic. Additionally, ResearchGate allows researchers and scientists the ability to interact and network, providing a direct means for dialogue and exchange of information from one researcher to the next. It enables researchers to exchange research content, articles that have been published, and to discuss newly added content within the field.

Another barrier that exists with behavior analysts maintaining and expanding their breadth of knowledge in the field rests in time constraints. When a clinician begins to work in the field, they are often juggling multiple responsibilities including professional activities that may make it difficult for them to carve out additional time to read the literature. While it would be worthwhile to add a few extra hours to one's day, it is not a realistic option and instead a behavior analyst will need to organize their time to allow for this important task to be completed. Proactively, behavior analysts should set aside time and schedule reading opportunities into their schedule. This time is as valuable as setting aside time for meetings or goal planning sessions. Self-management strategies (i.e., goal setting) could be implemented to help establish contingencies that would assist a behavior analyst in maintaining this behavior (Briggs et al., 2021). Additionally, a journal reading group could be established among colleagues to provide additional resources to everyone in the group and allow a time for professionals to meet to discuss advancements in the field. Behavior podcasts and behavior analytic blogs are also becoming more prominent as these sources may provide a less effortful and more engaging option to obtaining up to date information on newsworthy information and recent research that has been published (Briggs et al., 2021).

A third barrier that exists when contacting the literature in the field of behavior analysis is funding constraints. Typically, behavior analysts working in the field are required to bill

an insurance provider for their time as a means to generate revenue. When a behavior analyst spends time not engaging in this service and instead reading to advance their knowledge and skill set, they are not able to generate revenue as this is not a billable service. Therefore, behavior analysts may be faced with an ethical dilemma. They may need to request time during their work day to be able to engage in reading literature, may need to ask to form a journal reading group among colleagues in their work environment that others could benefit from, or they may need to find time outside of their work obligations to read literature that would enhance their knowledge and skill set.

Although there are barriers present that may deter behavior analysts from exhibiting effort when staying abreast of the recent research as it is published, solutions are available to assist with alleviating some of these hurdles. In an effort to maintain competence, it is important for behavior analysts to also engage in professional development activities. There are a myriad of conferences that are readily available for behavior analysts to attend throughout the nation and world each year. However, behavior analysts should attend these conferences with purpose, working to engage in development events and to expand their current professional repertoires. Three main goals often exist for a behavior analyst when attending a conference: the advancement and further refinement of current skills, discovering new areas of interest that would be valuable to explore, and networking with other professionals in the field (Becerra et al., 2020).

Foundational knowledge and skills based on the principles of behavior analysis are ingrained into the educational experiences of behavior analysts. Through years of practice and experience, skills should be further refined and goals outlined that move a behavior analyst's level of competency from mastered to expertise. By attending a conference and attending presentations that discuss an analyst's clinical or research practices, this allows a behavior analyst to thoroughly listen to these discussions, further conceptualize the information presented into a deeper level of understanding, and look for unique or innovative ways to solve problems that the behavior analyst is experiencing in their practice (Becerra et al., 2020). Panel discussions can provide insight into how other professionals in the field solve problems and allows for other clinicians to submit their own questions on the information presented to gain further clarity surrounding problems that they may need guidance on.

It is also important for a behavior analyst to explore interests outside of their scope of competence or outside of their typical research practices. This allows a behavior analyst

to expand their knowledge and to learn if there are other areas of interest within the field that spark their curiosity. This may also allow behavior analysts to work with new populations or in new environments. By expanding one's interests into various subdisciplines, it enhances the viability of a behavior analyst and increases their marketability for future endeavors. The field of behavior analysis is continually expanding into other realms, and it is useful to have behavior analysts that have a knowledge base in these other areas as expansion continues. However, it is important to note that just because a behavior analyst attends a discussion on a topic, it does not make them qualified to provide treatment to individuals based on this topic. A behavior analyst would still need to gain further training and development of their skills in this new area before they are qualified to practice on this topic (Becerra et al., 2020).

Networking and socializing at a conference is an important endeavor as it leads to the acquisition of additional information sharing contacts, possible mentors, and new collaborators (Becerra et al., 2020). At times, behavior analysts encounter research questions or issues that may arise in practical application of an intervention with a client, and it is important to have additional resources to reach out and contact so that collaboration may occur and additional insight can be gained to further support client needs. This guides behavior analysts in future occasions for professional growth. Not only is a behavior analyst afforded the opportunity for these new contacts, but these connections provide access to new resources and materials, various roles within subgroups and associations within the field, and possible employment opportunities as they are brought forth. Exhibits at conferences are a good spot to discuss further needs or opportunities with representatives from those organizations, seek out products or services that organizations offer, and even get a leg up over other candidates seeking similar positions (Becerra et al., 2020).

An additional Ethics code established by the BACB to look closely at involves the continual evaluation of behavior-change interventions (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). After a behavior analyst has conducted research and determined the best intervention to implement for the individual in need of services, the next step in the process is to implement the intervention. However, simply because research was already conducted on the intervention does not mean that continual evaluation and guidance from further research conducted does not occur. This is an on-going process and continues throughout the implementation of the intervention. In an effort to demonstrate that an intervention was selected based on important and relevant research, progress monitoring should occur to demonstrate that the intervention is effective for the individual affected by treatment (Contreras et al., 2021). Continuous

monitoring of progress once an intervention is in the implementation phase is both pragmatic and responsible for a behavior analyst to ensure is being conducted (Contreras et al., 2021).

There are several forms of data that can be collected that are helpful when continually monitoring the progress of an intervention. One source of data is to collect information on the target behavior itself. Evidence-based behavior analysis is based on the collection and analysis of continuous data collection on the target behavior (Contreras et al., 2021). When a behavior analyst is designing their intervention for implementation, they should also focus on designing their data collection methods and systems to ensure that there is enough data available for analysis of the intervention and to support decisions that will need to be made regarding the intervention. Graphs that allow for visual analysis of the data are important to also include as these allow for the data to be evaluated on a frequent basis (Contreras et al., 2021). Furthermore, it is vital that measures of reliability and fidelity are included in the data analysis methods and collection of data. This level of data collection will allow a behavior analyst to determine if an intervention is effective and to assess the quality of the treatment. For example, if the data collection reveals that the target behavior is not changing, it could lead the behavior analyst into evaluating the fidelity of the treatment. This could mean that the intervention is not being implemented consistently across practitioners or that the individual that is being affected by treatment is not receiving reinforcement as directed in the intervention. Therefore, this level of data collection is important as it allows a behavior analyst to make treatment decisions. The behavior analyst may want to make revisions to the treatment intervention and/or make revisions to the data collection methods and even retrain the individuals collecting data and/or delivering treatment to ensure fidelity. Additionally, social validity measures should be included, particularly early in the process as well as throughout treatment. Surveys and structured interviews should be established and conducted with clients and stakeholders so that good outcomes of the intervention can be promoted and programmed for (Contreras et al., 2021).

## **Section 1 Personal Reflection**

Why do you think it is important to include a client and stakeholders in a discussion on goal development and intervention implementation?

Why is it important to not only focus on a decrease in behavior, but also meaningful change for the individual?

Why should treatment goals be measured against societal standards?

Why do ABA-based interventions differ from one individual to the next?

What value could networking bring to an individual's practical application of behavior analysis?

Are there barriers that exist in your access to increasing your level of expertise in the field and if so, what are they?

How can you overcome or work to alleviate the barriers that exist in continuing to increase your breadth of knowledge in the field of behavior analysis?

## Section 1 Key Words

Adaptive behavior - a behavior that allows an individual to cope in their own environment with the least conflict with others and greatest success

Discrete trial training - a method of teaching that is broken down into smaller components so that skills are taught one step at a time

Fidelity - strategies that monitor and increase the accuracy and consistency of interventions to ensure that each portion of an intervention is implemented or delivered as planned

Habilitation - exists when an individual's repertoire has changed so that short and long term reinforcers are maximized and short and long term punishers are minimized

Normalization - belief that individual with disabilities be integrated into mainstream society regardless of their disability

Positive punishment - a form of behavior modification where a modifier is added after the behavior occurs resulting in a decrease in the behavior

Punisher - a stimulus change that occurs that decreases the likelihood of future occurrences of a behavior that immediately precedes it

Reinforcer - a stimulus change that occurs that increases the likelihood of future occurrences of a behavior that immediately precedes it

Reliability - the extent to which instances of repeated measurement of the same behavior or event results in the same value



Replacement behavior - a behavior that is aligned to replace an unwanted behavior that will serve the same function or need

Self-management strategies - behavior change strategies that produce the desired change in behavior and are applied at a personal level

Social significance - immediate and long term benefits for the individual engaging in the behavior

Social validity - the degree or extent to which targeted behaviors are appropriate, treatment interventions are acceptable to the individual affected by treatment, and significant changes are produced

Stakeholder - an individual, other than the client, that is impacted and invested in the services provided by a behavior analyst

## **Section 1 Case Study Review #1**

A child that is in a school setting and diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has been having difficulty maintaining focus on classwork and sitting in their assigned seat during class time. The teacher of this student calls the school appointed behavior analyst to consult in the classroom and to see if there are any recommendations that could be implemented to help this child further. The behavior analyst goes to the classroom on several different occasions and watches the child at different periods of time during instruction and activities that take place within the classroom. Once the behavior analyst has finalized their observations, the behavior analyst reaches back out to the teacher and provides the recommendation of integrating a token economy for the student to assist with staying seated in their seat. The teacher thinks this is a great idea and reaches out to the child's parent to let them know of the recommendation. Unfortunately, the parents disagree with the recommendation from the behavior analyst and tell the teacher that she should allow the child time throughout class to use a fidget toy.

1. Which ethical codes that have been discussed thus far have been disregarded in this scenario?
2. How should the behavior analyst have started the interaction with the child and their family?
3. What can be done to help mitigate this situation?



## Section 1 Case Study Review #2

A child brings in an iPad to the clinic where they receive services that they use at home for free time and to watch movies. During play time with another child, the iPad is left with the behavior analyst to ensure that no harm comes to it while unattended. When the iPad is brought to the behavior analyst, the behavior analyst notices that there is an inappropriate picture that the child has saved as their wallpaper. The behavior analyst decides to change the picture and when they go into the images folder, the behavior analyst notices that there are pornographic images of various children on the iPad that have been downloaded from the parent's cell phone through their internet account. The behavior analyst is not sure if they have grounds to report the images to local law officials or child protective services since the behavior analyst does not own the device and went into the device's images without consent.

1. How should the behavior analyst handle this situation with the parent's of the child?
2. Should the behavior analyst notify local law officials or just discuss the situation with her supervisor?
3. Are there any steps that should be taken to lower the risk that the family will be upset with the behavior analyst?

## Section 1 Case Study Review #3

A new child has begun receiving services at an ABA clinic. Prior to enrollment, the family met with the behavior analyst that would be overseeing the case. The organizational policies were explained, treatment methodologies were explored, and other applicable information was shared with the family. The family agrees that this ABA clinic is the best in the area and proceeds with providing consent for services. They sign the necessary forms and the child starts receiving services. The registered behavior technician (RBT) that is working with the child starts to interact with the child and provides them with options that they can engage in. The child tells the RBT that they do not want to play with them and that they do not want to be there. The RBT continues to try to build rapport with the student; however, these attempts are unsuccessful. After several hours, the child is still adamant that they do not want to be there and do not want to play with the RBT. The RBT and behavior analyst are unsure of how to proceed with the child.

1. Is assent applicable in this situation since the family has provided consent for the child to receive treatment?
2. How should the RBT and behavior analyst handle this situation?
3. Are there other avenues that the RBT could pursue that may help with building rapport with the child?

## **Section 1 Case Study Review #4**

There is an RBT that works at an organization that provides in-home services. When the RBT goes to the home for each session, the RBT is greeted by the parent of the client and the individual receiving services. After having been at the house for several sessions, the parent begins to talk to the RBT more and more at the start of each session when the RBT arrives. One day, the parent pulls the RBT aside and says that the behavior analyst and them discussed only having the targets probed at the beginning of each session and only collecting data during this time for each session. The parent also states that the behavior analyst told them that they wanted to use the remainder of each session to work on each skill that is outlined, but that data did not need to be collected for the trials that were conducted in each session. Instead, the RBT should use their best judgment when trying to determine the last prompt level required to complete the target. The RBT feels that the parent knows their child best and wants to make the parent happy while they are in their home.

1. What should the RBT do to handle the situation at this moment in the scenario?
2. How should the RBT collect data on the targets in acquisition while they are in the home setting?
3. How should the RBT interact with the parent so that they do not jeopardize their rapport yet still collect data that are valid?

## **Section 2: Factors that can Influence Ethical Decision-Making for Practitioners**

Ethical decision-making should be regarded as a behavior and considered as involving an individual's ability to make a choice between two or more options. There are laws and principles that govern all behavior that also comes into play when engaging in ethical

decision-making. When a behavior analyst understands how different factors affect different choices that individuals make, it can lead to behavior analysts training employees to engage in ethical decision-making behavior, to prevent ethical dilemmas that have previously been raised, and how to respond in an appropriate manner when faced with an ethical situation (Broadhead et al., 2018). In this section, several factors will be explored that can influence ethical decision-making for practitioners.

## **Research on Choice Behavior**

When two options are available for an individual to choose from, their responding will be determined based on the different schedules of reinforcement they have contacted previously (Broadhead et al., 2018). The decision that results in greater amounts of reinforcement will ultimately have more behavior allocated to it, and the response that has previously resulted in lesser amounts of reinforcement will result in less behavior being allocated to that option. For example, in an operant chamber a pigeon may be given the choice of two different keys to peck. If the pigeon pecks the key on the left, it will result in the pigeon gaining access to grain on a variable interval (VI) 10s schedule. If the pigeon decides to peck the key on the right, though, it will result in the pigeon gaining access to grain on VI 25s schedule. Researchers can evaluate how many times a pigeon pecks a particular key; however, once the pigeon is able to identify the difference between pecking each key, the pigeon will often peck the key that results in obtaining reinforcement more quickly. It is important to understand that different schedules of reinforcement will influence an individual's decision-making behavior when provided options to choose from (Broadhead et al., 2018).

When continuing to evaluate how different schedules of reinforcement can affect decision-making skills, it is ideal to look at applicable scenarios that behavior analysts are faced with. For example, behavior analysts work with a variety of clients on a daily basis. They have the option to analyze data, update report information, conduct assessments, update programming needs, and even supervise staff. Typically, the model within any given clinic is that the behavior analyst will spend time with the client, conducting observations of programming in acquisition and the interaction between the staff member and the client. Often, behavior analysts have clients with a wide range of insurance providers as their funding sources. If we look at the caseload of a behavior analyst and the different funding sources that each client has, we can determine that the hourly reimbursement rate for one client may differ for another client on the same caseload. A behavior analyst may choose to spend a majority of their time with clients who have an insurance provider that reimburses at a higher rate.

Furthermore, when evaluating the services provided for clients on a particular caseload, it is also important to evaluate the needs of each client and the staff that are supporting the clients. Some employees may have a friendlier disposition, more advanced skill set, and calmer demeanor when dealing with difficult situations. Behavior analysts may find themselves spending time with clients that have employees working with them that fit this description more so than employees that require additional support and guidance, are newer to the organization, or typically complain about their work situation.

By understanding how the different schedules of reinforcement apply to ethical decision-making behavior, it will guide behavior analysts and leaders within an organizational environment to make ethical decisions regarding the choices that are brought before them (Broadhead et al., 2018). It will bring to light that access to reinforcement can affect decision making skills and that behavior analysts should be aware that this aspect could be guiding their choice between different options.

## **Outcomes that are Delayed and Probabilistic**

Some of the outcomes that occur do not result as an immediate response to an action. Some outcomes occur in a delayed manner and can be uncertain if they will occur or not. For example, at a routine doctor's appointment, the doctor could skip a screening question that is normally asked at appointments. To the physician's eye, the patient appears healthy and does not exhibit any problems. However, a few months later, the patient begins to exhibit symptoms that could have been caught by asking the screening question at the routine appointment. These symptoms are delayed although the problem existed a few months ago. The symptoms did not result as an immediate response. Additionally, if the screening question would have been asked, it is uncertain that these symptoms would have existed in the future.

When looking at this circumstance under the scope of a behavior analyst's perspective, billing insurance providers for ABA services provided also contains a delayed and probabilistic outcome. It is often uncertain for a provider to know if they will be reimbursed for a service provided. Medical insurance claims are denied every day for a multitude of reasons. Precertification may not be in place, medical necessity may not be delineated, or required components needed for an authorization may not have been submitted. While there are certain procedures and parameters that a behavior analyst can put in place to increase the likelihood that they will be reimbursed for a service provided, there is always a level of uncertainty that exists when ABA services are provided.

In an additional example, behavior analysts are often pressured to obtain a specified number of billable hours within a certain time frame. Organizational leaders have worked to figure the amount of billable hours that are needed to be reached each week in order to pay for the costs of the organization to stay in business. If an organization is at risk for not being able to cover these costs, a behavior analyst may be faced with decisions to make regarding their billing practices. Behavior analysts may be asked to lie about services that were delivered, increase their service delivery method so that two clients are being seen at the same time despite being able to bill for one to one services, or even to decrease their non billable activities so that more time can be spent obtaining revenue for the organization. By engaging in some of these activities, a behavior analyst may be able to obtain revenue for the organization with the risk of lying to an insurance provider. Although there is a chance that an organization could be fined for this unethical behavior, it is still a fine that would not be immediate and is uncertain. The behavior analyst will engage in discounting, where they will either lie to the insurance provider or engage in honest billing practices (Broadhead et al., 2018). Their decision is based on which option provides them or their organization with the highest amount to gain or the least amount to lose.

With these examples that have been provided, it represents a clearer analysis of how the delay and uncertainty of an outcome can affect ethical decision-making among behavior analysts. The more delayed or uncertain an outcome may be, the less likely an individual is to work to obtain that outcome (Broadhead et al., 2018). Therefore, it is important to keep these factors in mind when faced with options to choose from.

## **Length of Time and Information Available**

The quality of a decision that is made can be affected by several factors, including the time that the behavior analyst has available to them to make the decision and the amount of information they have available to them that can lead them to an acceptable decision. It has been found that as the length of time one has available to them to make a decision increases, then the decision that is made is ideally more optimal for the situation (Broadhead et al., 2018). Conversely, if the length of time available is minimal, then it has been found that the decision made is not necessarily as optimal for the situation as it could have been otherwise (Broadhead et al., 2018).

For example, a behavior analyst may be working in the home environment and at the end of their session with a client, the parent asks the behavior analyst to watch the client while the parent leaves the home to run to the bank real quick. The behavior

analyst, needing to make a quick decision, tells the parent that is fine and watches the client as they understand that it might be difficult to take the client in the car to run this quick errand. The behavior analyst was caught off guard, and wanting to continue with their supportive relationship with the parent, agrees to this request. The behavior analyst was not provided with much time to make an optimal decision as they were provided with insufficient time to analyze the situation and forced to make a decision that placed them in a predicament. If the behavior analyst had been provided more time, the behavior analyst may have been able to consult a supervisor, been allowed more time to consider all viable options, or even evaluate the BACB Code of Ethics (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). When a behavior analyst is provided more time to make a decision, all options can be weighed and additional resources consulted, allowing an optimal decision to be made.

Additionally, the amount of information that is available to the behavior analyst that is making a decision can influence the caliber of the decision that is made (Broadhead et al., 2018). The more information that can be provided to the behavior analyst will allow for a more optimal decision to be made. On the other hand, if a behavior analyst is provided with little collateral information, it may be difficult to make a choice and may lead to unethical decisions being made.

For example, a behavior analyst is often faced with making intervention decisions for clients. A client that exhibits self-injurious behaviors may necessitate an intervention being implemented to ensure their safety and reduce the exhibition of the behavior. A behavior analyst can decide on an intervention to implement based on previous research in this area; however, if the behavior analyst has information concerning the exhibition of the behavior from a functional analysis recently conducted, the most effective intervention can be selected as it pertains to the individual (Broadhead et al., 2018). On the other hand, if the behavior analyst is requested to determine the most appropriate intervention without having assessment time and seeing the exhibition of the behavior or no information regarding interventions that have previously been tried, then the most effective intervention may not be able to be selected and continued harm could be experienced by the individual and those providing support. Therefore, it is ideal that all information and resources that can be obtained and provided to the behavior analyst are made available so that the most optimal decision can be made for treatment.

## Educational Background and Expertise of Practitioner

Another factor that can influence ethical decision-making lies within the educational background and expertise of the behavior analyst. A behavior analyst that has more expertise and knowledge base in an area within the field will present with a greater likelihood of making an optimal decision than someone with less expertise or experience in the field (Broadhead et al., 2018). The behavior analyst would be able to pull from previous decisions made, experience of working with various interventions or problematic behaviors, and even different scenarios that have happened to colleagues to know how to respond or make a decision that is appropriate for the situation.

It is often easier for a behavior analyst to make difficult ethical decisions when they can rely on their expertise and background knowledge as well as the ability to draw on past experiences to help formulate solutions and ultimately decide on a response. In some situations, a behavior analyst may be faced with a situation where different BACB Ethics Code guidelines conflict with one another, and it is necessary for the behavior analyst to identify the most appropriate response that is ethically justified (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020; Broadhead et al., 2018).

For example, a behavior analyst may be faced with a situation where a parent of an individual is attempting to choose between an empirically or nonempirically supported and validated treatment. The parent is concerned with how quickly their child will be able to talk, and one set of treatment therapists informed the parent that the nonempirically supported treatment would allow the individual to talk within a couple of weeks. On the other hand, a team of behavior analysts met with the parent and informed them that the empirically supported treatment option is the treatment option that they would advocate the individual receiving as it has its basis in research and has proven to be effective with other participants. However, the parents are still conflicted and want to know which option will have the individual talking the quickest. At this point in the discussion, the behavior analyst may be faced with an ethical dilemma that they need to work through. The behavior analyst must decide if they are to be honest with the parents, knowing that they are at risk of losing the individual as a client and the child being exposed to an ineffective treatment. The behavior analyst understands that they are obligated to tell the parents, with the utmost truth and honesty, that they cannot guarantee that the individual will be talking with the treatment approach they recommend. The behavior analyst also needs to advocate for the more effective treatment. In these situations, the behavior analyst will need to rely on their past



exposure to similar situations as well as their expertise to ensure they are making an ethical decision.

## Resources

When creating and implementing interventions, behavior analysts need to be able to access a variety of resources that assist with the success of an intervention. If a behavior analyst has more resources readily available to them, they will find it easier to make a more optimal decision when faced with a situation. Behavior analysts that have less access to resources or that have to wait for access to required resources will take longer to make a favorable decision (Broadhead et al., 2018).

There are a variety of resources that behavior analysts may need access to when developing successful interventions or answering questions that may arise. For example, one type of resource is a physical resource. These resources are items like cards, access to a copy machine to create pictures, or even the ability to have the next set of electronic pictures available on an electronic device used to assist with communication. A behavior analyst's ability to develop programming for an individual will rely greatly on their access to these resources needed for effective implementation of teaching methods. If a behavior analyst has these physical resources readily available, there is a greater likelihood that that an abundance of new targets will be available each week to the individual instead of being limited to only one or two new targets because that is all of the stimuli that is available to the behavior analyst for programming needs (Broadhead et al., 2018).

Additionally, behavior analysts need to be able to have access to emotional resources as these contribute to optimal decision-making skills (Brown, 2021). Prolonged and continual exposure to stress can lead to burnout among practitioners. Burnout has been found to be associated with three distinct components. The first component is emotional exhaustion, and this occurs when emotional resources are depleted as a result of the high demands of a job, leading to increased levels of fatigue and a behavior analyst feeling overwhelmed (Brown, 2021). The second component is depersonalization, and this occurs when a behavior analyst exhibits hardened attitudes and side comments that are not supportive or sincere. These cynical statements could be made toward coworkers and colleagues, diminishing productive work relationships and resulting in a disconnect between the employee and work organization. Lastly, individuals may also experience a diminished sense of personal accomplishment. This is associated with lower levels of job performance.



By understanding the components of burnout and how it relates to emotional resources for behavior analysts, it allows behavior analysts to realize the effects that may be associated with personal, professional, and organizational functioning. Research has shown that burnout is associated with the use of fear reactions, attitudes toward one's job which are predictive of an employee's productive and counterproductive workplace behaviors, and work engagement (Brown, 2021). If a behavior analyst is experiencing burnout and a depletion of their emotional resources, this can lead to unethical decisions being made, turnover in the work environment which may result in a discontinuity of services for an individual, or lower goal attainment and drive for meeting the needs of individuals being served.

An additional type of resource that behavior analysts will need access to are peer-reviewed publications. These publications allow the behavior analyst to have access to evidence-based information to help guide the development of interventions and to provide them with a knowledge base to expand their expertise when having to respond to situations. These resources aid in the development of ethical decision-making skills; however, research has shown that there are limited resources available to behavior analysts outside of the availability of the BACB Ethics Code or a few books that guide ethical behavior (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020; Broadhead et al., 2018). Therefore, future research that produces the development of peer-reviewed articles on ethical decision making would prove to be beneficial to behavior analysts.

## **Supervisory Pressure**

When employment opportunities misalign with employee expectations, it can often be for a number of reasons. One reason that can be at the forefront of this misalignment is supervisory pressure to act unethically when making decisions. Behaviors that are outlined by the BACB Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts may not align with employer expectations (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). When evaluating BCBAAs that are employed by school systems, there is often not a system in place that establishes guidelines for supervising BCBAAs. Although behavior analysts are guided to only practice within their scope of competence, school systems may assign a case to a behavior analyst that falls outside of their areas of expertise. Additionally, school board expectations and state and federal regulations concerning special education services may not align with the ethical guidelines established for behavior analysts by the BACB (Brown, 2021).

Research has found that BCBAs in school systems have been told to not recommend services because of the financial strain that it might cost the school district, to remove a student from the school setting without due process, as well as to not follow the recommendations for the least restrictive setting for the student (Brown, 2021). When faced with these types of situations, BCBAs can find themselves caught in the middle of following the direction of their employer or abiding by the ethical codes outlined for BCBAs.

## **Discussion of Applicable Ethics Codes**

Per the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts there are various ethical standards that should be evaluated when identifying factors that can influence ethical decision-making among practitioners (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). By being aware of these factors, solutions can be analyzed to provide support to behavior analysts, assist with alleviating certain factors within organizations, and identify characteristics that are associated with job performance that could contribute to unethical decisions being made.

### **1.05 Practicing within Scope of Competence**

*Behavior analysts practice only within their identified scope of competence. They engage in professional activities in new areas (e.g., populations, procedures) only after accessing and documenting appropriate study, training, supervised experience, consultation, and/or co-treatment from professionals competent in the new area. Otherwise, they refer or transition services to an appropriate professional.*

### **3.03 Accepting Clients**

*Behavior analysts only accept clients whose requested services are within their identified scope of competence and available resources (e.g., time and capacity for case supervision, staffing). When behavior analysts are directed to accept clients outside of their identified scope of competence and available resources, they take appropriate steps to discuss and resolve the concern with relevant parties. Behavior analysts document all actions taken in this circumstance and the eventual outcomes.*

### **3.06 Consulting with Other Providers**

*Behavior analysts arrange for appropriate consultation with and referrals to other providers in the best interests of their clients, with appropriate informed consent, and in compliance with applicable requirements (e.g., laws, regulations, contracts, organization and funder policies).*

### **3.12 Advocating for Appropriate Services**

*Behavior analysts advocate for and educate clients and stakeholders about evidence-based assessment and behavior change intervention procedures. They also advocate for the appropriate amount and level of behavioral service provision and oversight required to meet defined client goals.*

### **3.13 Referrals**

*Behavior analysts make referrals based on the needs of the client and/or relevant stakeholders and include multiple providers when available. Behavior analysts disclose to the client and relevant stakeholders any relationships they have with potential providers and any fees or incentives they may receive for the referrals. They document any referrals made, including relevant relationships and fees or incentives received, and make appropriate efforts to follow up with the client and/or relevant stakeholders.*

### **3.14 Facilitating Continuity of Services**

*Behavior analysts act in the best interests of the client to avoid interruption or disruption of services. They make appropriate and timely efforts to facilitate the continuation of behavioral services in the event of planned interruptions (e.g., relocation, temporary leave of absence) and unplanned interruptions (e.g., illness, funding disruption, parent request, emergencies). They ensure that service agreements or contracts include a general plan of action for service interruptions. When a service interruption occurs, they communicate to all relevant parties the steps being taken to facilitate continuity of services. Behavior analysts document all actions taken in this circumstance and the eventual outcomes.*

### **3.15 Appropriately Discontinuing Services**

*Behavior analysts include the circumstances for discontinuing services in their service agreement. They consider discontinuing services when: (1) the client has met all behavior-change goals, (2) the client is not benefiting from the service, (3) the behavior analyst and/or their supervisees or trainees are exposed to potentially harmful conditions that cannot be reasonably resolved, (4) the client and/or relevant stakeholder requests discontinuation, (5) the relevant stakeholders are not complying with the behavior-change intervention despite appropriate efforts to address barriers, or (6) services are no longer funded. Behavior analysts provide the client and/or relevant stakeholders with a written plan for discontinuing services, document acknowledgment of the plan, review the plan throughout the discharge process, and document all steps taken.*

### **3.16 Appropriately Transitioning Services**

*Behavior analysts include in their service agreement the circumstances for transitioning the client to another behavior analyst within or outside of their organization. They make appropriate efforts to effectively manage transitions; provide a written plan that includes target dates, transition activities, and responsible parties; and review the plan throughout the transition. When relevant, they take appropriate steps to minimize disruptions to services during the transition by collaborating with relevant service providers.*

Behavior analysts are renowned for employing the use of evidence-based procedures within their practice. Over the course of time, substantial improvements in the human condition have been witnessed through use of these procedures, gaining notability for the breadth of use that ABA procedures have among various populations and within a variety of environments. Although the principles of behavior analysis are applicable in this manner, it is important for a behavior analyst to not assume that they can reduce all behaviors they encounter, implement any intervention they wish, or be knowledgeable in every aspect of the field. Therefore, it is important for a behavior analyst to only practice within their scope of competence.

There are several negative outcomes that can be associated with a behavior analyst practicing outside of their scope of competence. One outcome is that it can be a waste of treatment time for the individual receiving services (Broadhead et al., 2018). Authorizations for individuals receiving services are limited to the hours that have been approved by an insurance provider. Providing any additional hours of treatment outside of the authorization may lead to these services not being reimbursed for the provider.

Therefore, with the limited hours that are approved, a behavior analyst should make the most of the time available for services. This includes using a behavior analyst that is the most qualified to provide the services based on their experience and expertise and selecting a behavior analyst that is competent to guide treatment for the individual receiving services based on the individual's needs (Broadhead et al., 2018). Another outcome that can be identified for a behavior analyst practicing outside of their scope of competence is the misuse of behavior analysis (Broadhead et al., 2018). A behavior analyst that provides treatment for an individual that they lack expertise or experience in treating may increase the likelihood that the behavior analyst fails to take into consideration various variables that could affect an intervention or outcome. By not being able to notice these variables, it could lead the implementation of an intervention off course, important components of the intervention may be missing, and the effectiveness of the treatment implemented could be diminished. An additional outcome associated with a behavior analyst practicing outside of their scope of competence is the possible inability to continue to practice as a behavior analyst. As it is outlined in the BACB Code of Ethics, a behavior analyst should only practice within their scope of competence and a violation of this code could lead to a termination of their certification (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020).

Ideally, each behavior analyst should be able to identify and define their own scope of competence. However, this can be difficult to do, even as an experienced behavior analyst. Therefore, it is important that a behavior analyst analyzes their own education, training, and experience. A behavior analyst should look at the various populations, behavioral topographies, and procedures that they were exposed to in their coursework, under the direction and supervision of a BCBA, and while in a clinical setting (Broadhead et al., 2018).

A behavior analyst's coursework is an important component to take into consideration when identifying one's own scope of competence. Coursework can be evaluated at three different levels: population specific, setting specific, and procedure specific. Individuals that receive academic instruction in the area of geriatrics would have a greater knowledge base and improve their competence with this population than they would have with other populations they have not received instruction about. Furthermore, behavior analysts that have taken coursework in organizational behavior management techniques may limit their level of expertise and not be able to provide guidance on employees working with animals in a zoo setting. Therefore, it is important for a behavior analyst to be able to identify the different areas that their coursework has covered.

On an ongoing basis, a behavior analyst should analyze their scope of competence by identifying the aforementioned areas as a behavior analyst's scope of competence can be ever-changing. Behavior analysts can work to expand their scope of competence as they gain more experience in the field and come in contact with resources that can contribute to their learning in various areas of the field. One way to expand one's scope of competence is to locate another qualified professional or behavior analyst that has extensive experience in the topic area that is of interest. This identified person should be able to provide a behavior analyst with supervision on the topic and advance their knowledge in the area. It is important to work with the supervising clinician, develop goals that should be adhered to during this expansion of knowledge, and provide timelines that both the supervising clinician and behavior analyst seeking additional experience should adhere to.

Often, behavior analysts may be faced with an individual needing services that is outside of one's scope of competence. This becomes an ethical concern that should be evaluated with thoroughness and all options weighed regarding the situation. Ideally, a behavior analyst should delay the start of services with an individual that is outside of their scope of competence until a qualified professional with appropriate supervision and training is available. However, it is important to note that this may not always be a possible option. For example, an individual may need services that exhibits high intensity and high magnitude self-injurious behaviors and requires immediate treatment. There may be other providers in the near vicinity that can provide appropriate services to this individual; however, this individual and their relevant stakeholders have agreed to seek treatment from a location in which the behavior analyst is not necessarily the most skilled at handling the exhibition of intensive behaviors. At this point, the behavior analyst at this location should evaluate the reasons as to why accepting this individual for treatment would be the most optimal solution. This would be an opportune time to reach out and collaborate with other providers in the area. It would be important to determine the skill sets of other behavior analysts in the area and for the behavior analyst and individual to determine together if this location is the most appropriate location for treatment. It may be appropriate to refer the individual seeking treatment to another provider in the area. On the other hand, in the area in which the individual needing services lives, there may not be other providers that can provide appropriate services or are qualified to provide services to this individual. In this situation, an ethical situation presents as practicing outside of a behavior analyst's scope of competence is inappropriate and unacceptable within the field of behavior analysis. However, the behavior analyst should also act with the best interests of the individual in mind, and it may be that providing some services to the individual would be better than receiving no



services from anyone. In this situation, it is important for the behavior analyst to determine the possible benefits gained for this individual. At this time and with the research available in the field, there is not a recommended action that a behavior analyst should take. However, if the behavior analyst does determine that providing services to this individual is necessary, then the behavior analyst is obligated to continually be searching for additional resources, training, and supervision that would help support the individual needing services. The behavior analyst should also be honest with this individual and their stakeholders by discussing their own limitations when providing treatment and their continual efforts to find more appropriate services for the individual (Broadhead et al., 2018). It is important that a behavior analyst continually keeps in mind that an individual seeking or receiving treatment always deserves the best care from the best trained behavior analysts and providers.

Furthermore, an additional Ethics Code that should be evaluated is the discontinuation of services for individuals receiving treatment (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). Services can be discontinued for a multitude of reasons: individual could have attained all predetermined goals for services, individual could no longer need the services, or the individual could be being harmed by continual contact with services and request a discontinuation. When it has been recognized that a discontinuation of services should be recommended, a behavior analyst has an ethical obligation to the individual receiving services and is to plan for the termination of these services (Falakfarsa et al., 2021). Discontinuation of services should only occur after appropriate efforts to transition the services have been made and thoroughly documented conversations have taken place between the individual and relevant stakeholders regarding the situation. The behavior analyst should work to plan for discharge of services by transitioning services to the next provider if appropriate, attempt to minimize any disruption to services for the individual, and collaborate with all individuals in the process to ensure a smooth transition occurs (Olive, 2022).

Although in some instances a discontinuation of services may be a joyous time for some, other instances arise that result in the provider or behavior analyst needing to discontinue services. For example, some homes may not be suitable for treatment (i.e., sanitation concerns, weapons, degrading remarks to therapists, parent/caregiver noncompliance regarding previously agreed upon treatment procedures). Situations like these further warrant the need for a detailed service agreement being in place prior to start of services that outlines the consequences for violating these sections (Bailey et al., 2022).

In some situations, a transition of services may be warranted instead. A behavior analyst may need to take extended time off due to the birth or adoption of a child, they may quit their job and find employment elsewhere, or the provider may go out of business. In these scenarios, the individual receiving treatment may still need treatment. It is best that the transition paperwork documents the targeted dates for transition or timeline for tasks to be completed, and a description of what the transition will look like so that the staff involved will know and understand what their roles look like and what is expected of them (Bailey et al., 2022).

## Section 2 Personal Reflection

What choices have you been presented with that could have been affected by different schedules of reinforcement?

If an organizational leader within your work environment asked you to reduce your non billable activities, how would you proceed with this request?

When have you engaged in discounting behaviors?

Has the length of time you have had available affected a decision you have made in the past?

What resources have you found to not be readily available to you when developing programming for an individual?

What are some signs that coworkers have exhibited that could indicate burnout?

What would you do if you were presented with a case that you felt was outside of your scope of competence but no one else was more qualified than you to assist the individual needing services?

How have you previously planned for a transition of services for a client that has not met their predetermined goals outlined and is requesting a transition?

## Section 2 Key Words

Burnout - physical or mental exhaustion that leads to a decrease in personal resources and is often brought on by prolonged and continuous exposure to stress

Depersonalization - demonstration of hardened attitudes toward others



Discounting - the devaluing of a reward as it relates to the time it takes for the reward to be provided

Emotional exhaustion - increased levels of fatigue and feelings of being overwhelmed

Evidence-based research - information gathered to make an informed decision that is based on research and not an individual's opinion

Functional analysis - a procedure that sets up conditions based on the four functions of behavior to determine which condition produces the highest occurrences of behavior

Physical resource - a tangible item that is used to further learning or provide assistance in skill development

Probabilistic outcome - the likelihood that a consequence will occur

Schedules of reinforcement - a rule that exists that delineates how often an occurrence of a specified behavior will receive reinforcement

Scope of competence - a range of activities that a professional is able to perform at a proficient level

Variable interval - a schedule of reinforcement that provides reinforcement following the first correct response after a specified average amount of time

## **Section 2 Case Study Review #1**

A recently certified behavior analyst, Tim, took a position with an organization that worked predominantly with children diagnosed with ASD at a clinic setting. With this behavior analyst being recently certified, Tim had only taken a handful of continuing education units (CEUs) and instead were relying on their knowledge of behavior analytic principles from their educational resources as they completed tasks related to their employment. One day, the supervisor of the behavior analyst pulled Tim aside and asked them to discuss a new client that would be attending the clinic starting the next day. As the supervising behavior analyst began to discuss the client, it was apparent that the client had comorbid diagnoses and required use of a feeding tube, all of which the behavior analyst was unfamiliar with. The supervising behavior analyst reassured Tim that the behaviors exhibited by the client as they related to feeding time were easy to work through and required little knowledge on feeding tubes to work with the client. The supervising behavior analyst also told Tim that the client had only removed their feeding tube twice previously, but that the previous provider was able to get the feeding

tube placed back in. The supervising behavior analyst told Tim that this case would be the push that he would need to expand his knowledge base and for him to gain further experience into the field. Tim does not want to disappoint his supervisor and wants the client to receive services.

1. How should Tim respond to his supervisor in a professional and appropriate manner?
2. What are some additional things that Tim could do to prepare for this client if he were to provide services?
3. How should the members of leadership within the organization structure their intake process and ensure their behavior analysts are not engaging in risk when providing services to clients?

## **Section 2 Case Study Review #2**

There are several behavior analysts that work at a clinic that provides services to individuals with disabilities. The director of the location has been tasked by the owner of the organization with evaluating the current waitlist for services and bringing at least 15 new clients into the clinic for services within the next month. The owner of the company states that revenue has decreased over the course of the last quarter, and the only way to continue to stay in business is to bring in new clients. The director is bothered by this information and calls a team meeting with the behavior analysts at the clinic to discuss how the clients will be brought in as well as caseload responsibilities. During this discussion, two behavior analysts resign and provide a two week notice. The other behavior analysts began getting upset and started talking about added workload and hours that will need to be worked. They also stated that they will not be able to effectively meet the needs of all of the individuals on each of their caseload. Many of the behavior analysts stated that they were not comfortable taking on the additional clients. The director took notes during the meeting and let the behavior analysts know that they would take their concerns to the owner.

1. What should the director do to help mitigate the situation that occurred with the behavior analysts during the team meeting?
2. How does a behavior analyst determine when their caseload is too big and that they are unable to provide effective supervision?

3. What should the organization do to alleviate some of the stressors that are occurring with the behavior analysts regarding caseload size and the amount of hours being worked?

## Section 3: A System for Teaching and Maintaining Ethical Behavior

The field of behavior analysis is ever expanding and with it comes a reach to various populations and settings and new areas within the field being encountered that can benefit from the foundational principles. Behavior analysts are able to provide services in a variety of settings such as schools, homes, and within business organizations. They are able to guide the development of interventions in rural areas and in different cultures found around the world. Despite the vast array of populations and settings that behavior analysis can be used in, one common underlying goal exists among all behavior analysts. This goal involves improving the lives of others by using behavior analysis to contribute to the growth and well-being of others.

Even with the same underlying goal in place for all behavior analysts, the application of the Ethics Code can be starkly different across populations, cultures, and settings (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). When looking at how the application of this set of guidelines can be different, an area that can be highlighted is the notion that behavior analysts should protect all clients from exposure to harm, minimize the potential for harm, and have the best interest of their clients in mind at all times (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). For example, poisonous snakes are found more prominently in Arizona than they are in Alaska. Alaska is not readily known for having poisonous snakes throughout their state due to the climate and habitats needed for snakes to live. Therefore, when creating teaching and programming opportunities for individuals, it might be important for a behavior analyst to consider teaching a child to identify poisonous snakes as well as what to do when one is encountered and areas to avoid so that contact is not made with a poisonous snake. However, in Alaska, a behavior analyst may be more inclined to teach and plan programming needs around identifying a brown bear as they are the top predator in Alaska. Behavior analysts will need to be able to identify that differences exist among populations and settings, and that programming and intervention needs should be individualized.

Although this is a simplified example of how the general application of the Ethics Code has to be applied in a variety of settings, this application of a broad set of guidelines

exists on a much larger scale for behavior analysts (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). Even though behavior analysts are given the general guidance of how to integrate, maintain, and apply Ethics Codes, working in different contexts can present a variety of problems that are encountered and the need for a proactive approach to the application of the Ethics Code through systematic methods (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020).

## **Overview of Behavioral Systems Analysis (BSA)**

Organizations in the human service industry want to help others, possibly to any extent possible. This can often cause strain on any organization as they tend to grow and take on additional clients. While assisting those that need services, behavior analysts can often feel the push and pull between meeting the needs of the client and the needs of the organization. Growing a client base can result in more staff needing to be hired, staff that require training and additional support, and the need for more resources (i.e., space, materials, services provided). This path of organizational growth can also mean that ethical decision making processes can be hindered as behavior analysts take on additional responsibilities and clients. Therefore, it is important to utilize an approach that focuses on not only the organization but also the behaviors of the employees within the organization.

One systemic method that can be implemented by behavior analysts exists from the framework of a behavioral systems analysis (BSA) (Broadhead et al., 2018). BSA is an approach that identifies organizations as complex systems and evaluates human performance using both behavior and systems analysis (McGee et al., 2019). With BSA, the underlying principle is that if change occurs in the performance of one area of an organization, then change will definitely occur in other areas of the organization as well. The goal of BSA is to create balanced applications where areas that contain poor performance are improved, areas that have high performance are maintained within the organization, and the performance of outcomes of employees are geared toward the organizational goals.

Aspects of performance improvement among employees is guided by looking at and evaluating the bigger picture of the organization. BSA views the organization as being composed of several interrelated parts and when one part of the organization is changed, then these other interrelated parts will change in some aspect as well (McGee et al., 2019). Organizational alignment is key, where the goals and strategies that are

outlined at each individual level within the organization can come together to contribute to the overarching goals of the organization.

At the employee level, the focus rests on how variables such as resources, feedback from others, and training can affect the employee's performance. Once these variables have been identified, they are prioritized with those variables that affect behaviors that contribute to the value of the overarching organizational goals listed at the top. These variables identify areas that should receive continued focus. It could mean that employees require further emphasis provided on areas of development and training or that feedback is continually given based on performance so that employees can perform their job duties and expectations at their highest ability. This level should focus on job clarity with the emphasis on what the job expectation is and how to complete that expectation. The antecedents and consequences surrounding employee behavior should be changed in a way that improves employee performance. In BSA, contingencies are made explicit and reinforcers are delivered contingent on results. When there is a contingent relationship that exists between performance and positive reinforcement, then the system that is put into place should promote a more enjoyable work environment for employees.

At the process level, the focus is on evaluating how the inputs and outputs are moved through the organization so that products and services are created. Within each organization, there are typically various departments that exist with each department completing different tasks or functions that contribute to the production of a service or product. At this level of the organization, collaboration between each department is ideal and often necessary so that inputs and outputs are able to be exchanged fluidly. Intermingling of departments provides a sense of cross-functionality that enables all departments to feel responsible for the end product or service, not just responsible for individual contributions. In an effort to further the sense of cross-functionality, the act of mapping the process of how inputs and outputs are exchanged within an organization should be done to further facilitate showing employees how they are contributing to the bigger picture of the organization and its goals.

At the organizational level, the main focus is on how the organization interacts and responds to market demands, the competitors that exist within the industry, as well as their suppliers and customers. A mission statement should be developed that provides those that interact with the organization a clear description of the purpose of the organization. Included in this mission statement should provide explanation as to why the organization exists, the advantages that this organization exhibits over other similar

organizations, and the type of customers that will be served by the products and services that are produced by the organization. While this might sound like a simple task to complete, it is valuable as the understanding of an organization's mission statements contributes to the development of the roles of each job and performer as well as the process goals that need to exist so that each component contributes to the overarching goals of the organization.

It is important for behavior analysts to be able to take this systemic model and to use the tools within this model to create various systems that coincide with a behavior analyst's behavior with the Ethics Code (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). BSA would allow behavior analysts the opportunity to define the behavior that they expect from employees within the organization. It would also allow them to teach, monitor, and provide feedback on the exhibition of these behaviors through the development of expectations for employees within the organization (Broadstreet et al., 2018). Through an organization that has processes based in BSA, the development of a happier work environment, more satisfied employees, and a purposeful work environment can contribute to a more ethical approach regarding decision-making.

Although some variations of BSA differ from one another, the basis of BSA remains the same from one organization to the next. There are a set of steps that define the process of BSA within the organization. Often, there will be steps that will require an organization to analyze, specify, design, implement, evaluate, and recycle (Broadstreet et al., 2018). When analyzing a behavior problem using the BSA approach, natural contingencies are evaluated so that variables within the environment can be identified that are either missing or contributing to a behavior problem within the organization. The specify step involves identifying goals or accomplishments that can be met in measurable terms. Defining organizational goals in this manner allows for the effects of the intervention to be measured and evaluated. After these two steps have been completed, a behavior analyst can then design their intervention selected based on their analysis of the environment and definition of goals. Once the intervention has been finalized, the behavior analyst can implement the intervention within the organization. While the intervention is being implemented, it is important to evaluate the effects of the intervention on behavior change, treatment fidelity, and if modifications need to be made to the intervention in order to achieve the predetermined goals. Lastly, since BSA is a continuous process, the behavior analyst will recycle or repeat this process until the goals are reached. This step allows for continuous improvement to the intervention as interventions continually need to be modified as variables within the environment may change.

Although ethical behavior may be specific to a certain setting or environment where the services are being delivered, behavior analysts that are implementing treatment may be faced with regular ethical dilemmas and are required to use the guidance from the Ethics Code to make informed ethical decisions (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). BSA is an approach that can be used to establish goals within an organization, design and implement interventions to work toward these goals, and help create an organization that fosters an environment where ethical decisions can be made.

## **Continuum of Care Screener (CCS)**

Initially, the Continuum of Care Screener (CCS) was developed for clinicians to assess the health and safety risks that existed during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, clinicians understood the need for a tool that could be used outside of this time period and provided feedback for revisions. After several rounds of revisions and task committee reviews, the CCS was finalized as a tool for cross-functional evaluation of risk (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022). This tool can be utilized across a variety of situations that present risk for behavior analysts. However, it is not designed to replace one's own clinical judgment and training but instead, it is available to assess variables that exist that contribute to risk.

The CSS provides a framework for behavior analysts concerning ethical risk mitigation when decisions need to be made regarding various situations that affect service delivery for individuals (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022). This tool should be completed for each unit or team within an organization. The CCS consists of open-ended questions and allows for an assessment to be completed as conditions concerning the situation change as time progresses. There are three components that comprise the CCS: administrative decisions, family, provider, and client behaviors, and analysis and treatment development (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022). In the first part of the CCS, mandates among professional and governmental agencies are addressed as well as the organizational climate. This section uses a top-down approach and reviews any nonclinical factors either inside or outside of the organization that may affect decision-making skills. Various mandates from both professional and governmental agencies are evaluated first, prior to the organizational climate so that behavior analysts are able to see any potential limitations that are being inflicted on clinical recommendations. In some cases, a discrepancy may exist among state mandates or governmental restrictions and professional guidelines. Per the Ethics Code, behavior analysts are to follow the law and as well as the requirements that exist among their professional community (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). If a conflict exists among these guidelines



and restrictions, it is then best for a behavior analyst to discuss options with colleagues and members of the unit so that results of the CCS and consequences of implementation of the guidance can be assessed (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022). For example, during the time when COVID-19 was prevalent and resulted in state mandated orders for nonessential individuals to stay home, individuals with disabilities were considered nonessential. This resulted in services for individuals with disabilities being halted and other avenues pursued (i.e., telehealth). At this point, behavior analysts would use the results from the CSS to determine plans for these individuals and how skill development could be maintained using the resources that were available to these individuals.

Furthermore, when assessing the organizational climate within an organization, it is important to evaluate the barriers that can affect service delivery options (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022). An organization needs to be able to adjust and adapt to contingencies that are changing while maintaining both fiscal and clinical operations during these conditions. Barriers that exist should be communicated to clinical teams so that productive discussions could be had among members of the unit as a problem solving avenue. This allows for information to be exchanged in an organized, clear, and comprehensive manner that allows others to make informed decisions.

In the second part of the CCS, the tool focuses on coping and support systems that exist within each family, the family and provider practices or behaviors that pertain to the situation that is affecting service delivery, and the behavioral needs of the client (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022). The behavior analyst will review factors that are related to the clinical context and that may affect decision-making skills. It is important to understand that the family and treatment come together to form a unit.

A behavior analyst should work to assess the context in which an intervention occurs as it is important to understand both the antecedents and consequences that exist among the comprehensive treatment plan. Modifications may need to be made to a treatment plan at any time, and it is important for a behavior analyst to evaluate any constraints that may exist or are placed on families during the development of the treatment plan. The family is evaluated based on their strengths and needs as well as evaluated on their risk of exposure to different environmental conditions based on their social behaviors and responsibilities.

When evaluating the client behaviors that occur or exist, service-related needs are examined against the risks that are involved in providing treatment at a range of intensities based on these behavioral needs (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022). Information is able to be gathered concerning the functions of problem behaviors, and the behavior

analyst is able to examine current treatment methods to determine if programs should be modified or adapted to meet ever changing needs of the individual affected by treatment or any restrictions that have risen in the environment. The behavior analyst then looks at developing programs needed in skill acquisition to address any changes or restrictions identified.

Lastly, in the third part of the CCS, an analysis is conducted of the information that has been gathered in the first two sections of the tool and the information is used to mitigate the risks that have been identified and guide development of a risk mitigation strategy for the units involved. The goal behind this component of the CCS is for a behavior analyst to select the treatment option that is optimal based on all of the collateral information that has been gathered in an organized and systematic manner. While the data that has been collected in the first two parts of the CCS are important in building the framework for ethical and effective decision-making skills, the data are also important in continual monitoring and ongoing analysis at mitigating risk as it enters the organization or environment (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022).

As a result, the CSS is a service delivery assessment tool that allows behavior analysts the capability to assess, monitor, and adapt treatment modality decisions as time progresses and risk comes and goes within an organization or environment (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022). The tool is not designed to replace a behavior analyst's training or supervision regarding ethical decision-making skills. Furthermore, research is continuing to move forward with fully evaluating the effects of the tool and the array of outcomes it can have for the field of behavior analysis (Hajiaghamohseni et al., 2022).

## **Discussion of Applicable Ethics Codes**

Per the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts, there are various ethical standards that should be evaluated when identifying a system for teaching and maintaining ethical behavior (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). By being aware of these codes and guidelines, behavior analysts can work toward creating an organizational environment that works toward mitigating risk and integrating ethical decision-making skills by means of a solid organizational framework.

### **1.02 Conforming with Legal and Professional Requirements**

*Behavior analysts follow the law and the requirements of their professional community (e.g., BACB, licensure board).*

## **2.01 Providing Effective Treatment**

*Behavior analysts prioritize clients' rights and needs in service delivery. They provide services that are conceptually consistent with behavioral principles, based on scientific evidence, and designed to maximize desired outcomes for and protect all clients, stakeholders, supervisees, trainees, and research participants from harm. Behavior analysts implement nonbehavioral services with clients only if they have the required education, formal training, and professional credentials to deliver such services.*

## **2.19 Addressing Conditions Interfering with Service Delivery**

*Behavior analysts actively identify and address environmental conditions (e.g., the behavior of others, hazards to the client or staff, disruptions) that may interfere with or prevent service delivery. In such situations, behavior analysts remove or minimize the conditions, identify effective modifications to the intervention, and/or consider obtaining or recommending assistance from other professionals. Behavior analysts document the conditions, all actions taken, and the eventual outcomes.*

## **4.04 Accountability in Supervision**

*Behavior analysts are accountable for their supervisory practices. They are also accountable for the professional activities (e.g., client services, supervision, training, research activity, public statements) of their supervisees or trainees that occur as part of the supervisory relationship.*

## **4.06 Providing Supervision and Training**

*Behavior analysts deliver supervision and training in compliance with applicable requirements (e.g., BACB rules, licensure requirements, funder and organization policies). They design and implement supervision and training procedures that are evidence based, focus on positive reinforcement, and are individualized for each supervisee or trainee and their circumstances.*

## **4.08 Performance Monitoring and Feedback**

*Behavior analysts engage in and document ongoing, evidence-based data collection and performance monitoring (e.g., observations, structured evaluations) of supervisees or trainees. They provide timely informal and formal praise and feedback designed to*

*improve performance and document formal feedback delivered. When performance problems arise, behavior analysts develop, communicate, implement, and evaluate an improvement plan with clearly identified procedures for addressing the problem.*

#### **4.09 Delegation of Tasks**

*Behavior analysts delegate tasks to their supervisees or trainees only after confirming that they can competently perform the tasks and that the delegation complies with applicable requirements (e.g., BACB rules, licensure requirements, funder and organization policies).*

#### **4.10 Evaluating Effects of Supervision and Training**

*Behavior analysts actively engage in continual evaluation of their own supervisory practices using feedback from others and client and supervisee or trainee outcomes. Behavior analysts document those self-evaluations and make timely adjustments to their supervisory and training practices as indicated.*

Behavior analysts should strive to utilize the best available evidence when developing a system for teaching and maintaining ethical behavior. The system should be based on research literature and grounded through integration of client values. It should have a framework that has its policies and procedures based on behavioral principles and designed to maximize the outcomes of those that use the system or work within the unit that is guided by use of the system. Through continued analysis and evaluation, the behavior analyst can also integrate other resources in development of this system; however, the behavior analyst should continue to evaluate these resources through the concepts and principles of behavior analysis (Contreras et al., 2021).

Ultimately, the behavior analyst is responsible for determining the best system to use when engaging in ethical decision-making skills. The system should abide by all laws and requirements outlined within the professional community. A behavior analyst should never break the law or encourage others to engage in behaviors that would have them break the law. They should also abide by and encourage others to abide by the requirements outlined by the BACB and any applicable licensure laws. This assists with building a solid framework from which one can base their own ethical decision-making skills on.

Additionally, a behavior analyst should identify any variables that affect service delivery for individuals. Mitigating risk to service delivery is key to assisting with the development

of a system for teaching and maintaining ethical behavior. Variables such as access to treatment, financial obligations, severity of behaviors, and expertise of the behavior analyst can affect the behavior analyst's ability to make optimal decisions. Therefore, minimizing these variables, collaborating with other professionals in the field, and gathering information regarding the situation will further assist with development of a solid framework for a system that employs ethical decision-making skills.

When a behavior analyst is in a supervisory capacity, the behavior analyst should take responsibility and be accountable for their supervisory practices. The behavior analyst should work to model ethical decision-making skills and collaborate with supervisees on situations as they arise so that further discussions can take place that allow for knowledge development and skill attainment on how to handle difficult situations as they occur. A behavior analyst is responsible for those individuals that they supervise. Therefore, it is ideal for a behavior analyst to incorporate learning and discussions throughout one's supervisory experience so that supervisees can understand the guidance that lies within a decision-making framework and the continual monitoring that is integrated into an ethical decision-making system. Supervision and training procedures should be evidence based with a focus on the use of positive reinforcement. These procedures should also be individualized depending on the circumstances that are present.

Furthermore, a behavior analyst is responsible for the actions of anyone under their supervision. When creating a framework that encourages ethical decision-making skills, it is important that a supervising behavior analyst should also consider how they will handle any ethical violation or incident that occurs that is unacceptable or inappropriate. A misunderstanding when having a conversation or uneasiness displayed when handling conflict can be misinterpreted, causing stakeholders to no longer have buy-in for a treatment procedure. Additionally, a supervisee that accidentally reinforces incorrect behavioral exhibition could destroy a significant amount of time and work that was already spent targeting behavior reduction. Therefore, it is important that direct, in-person interactions between a supervisee and supervisor occur as this continued oversight and continued training practices will aid in building a foundation for ethical decision-making skills.

Continued performance monitoring and feedback are vital to continued progress and guidance on decision-making skills. Feedback that is formal, documented, and shared with the supervisee are key components of this process (Bailey et al., 2022). Through continued monitoring and feedback, supervisees gain insight into task implementation,

job development skills, how to deal with conflict, and other aspects of a behavior analyst's position. By adapting this process and providing continued training opportunities, behavior analysts can begin to delegate tasks that supervisees are ready to complete. Improvement should be measured in the repertoires of the clients that a trainee works with to determine if progress has been made through training received. Continual evaluation and monitoring of supervisee performance can be conducted as well to determine if supervision and training sessions are effective. All of these components are important aspects to consider when developing a system for teaching and maintaining ethical behavior.

### **Section 3 Personal Reflection**

What is an example of the application of the ethics code that could be different from one culture to another (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020)?

Have you worked for an organization where there was a disconnect between the mission statement of the organization and the expectations of the employee?

What are some examples that you have encountered where you did not understand the expectations of your position?

What are some examples of clearly defined job expectations that you have previously encountered?

How has risk mitigation occurred in organizations that you have previously worked at?

What is an example of a situation in which risk entered an environment that you have been a part of, and the organizational leaders could have better delineated a course of action to mitigate the risk?

What are some procedures that a supervisor has employed to monitor your performance?

What are optimal ways that a new employee should be monitored when working with individuals receiving treatment?

### **Section 3 Key Words**

Antecedents - something that occurs immediately before the behavior

Behavioral systems analysis (BSA) - applies both behavior analysis and a systems approach to employee performance within an organization

Consequences - what occurs after a behavior is exhibited

Contingency - the conditions under which a response is followed by either the addition or removal of a stimulus

Cross-functionality - different members with different skill sets that work together toward a common goal

Positive reinforcement - the addition of something that increases the likelihood that the behavior will occur again at some point in the future

### **Section 3 Case Study Review #1**

A parent of a child receiving services at a clinic arrives to pick the child up from the clinic every day, usually 15-30 minutes late and yells at the RBT for various reasons from the car window as the RBT is bringing the child out to the car. The parent yells at the RBT for the scrubs that they are wearing even though they are the company uniform. The parent yells at the RBT and claims that the RBT is not feeding her child enough during lunch although the child eats all of the items that the parent packs in the child's lunch. The parent even yells at the RBT and calls them names, despite the RBT being pleasant and smiling at the parent each day. This continues for a month when the RBT tells the behavior analyst that they are no longer comfortable with the situation. One day, the owner calls the behavior analyst into their office and states that they have been informed that a parent has posted a public video that claims to show food that was provided to them from the clinic to help support the food needs of the client. In the food, there are maggots and other insects. The parent claims that the RBT is the one that provided them the food. The behavior analyst talks to the RBT regarding this situation. The RBT states that they have never provided food to the family and have never fed the child anything other than what the parent has packed for the child.

1. How should the behavior analyst approach the situation regarding the RBT with the parent?
2. What should the behavior analyst say to the RBT regarding the situation between the RBT and the parent?
3. Are there steps that could be put in place to mitigate situations like this from



occurring in the future?

## Section 3 Case Study Review #2

An RBT has worked for a company and received supervision for their fieldwork hours over the past several months. The RBT is wanting to leave the company and pursue a different organization so they can get additional experience and exposure to a different population within the field. The RBT's behavior analyst told them that they would not sign off on their final verification form as the RBT did not meet all of the requirements. The RBT has the monthly verification forms completed already. When the RBT asked the behavior analyst why they did not meet the requirements, the behavior analyst did not provide an explanation and was unable to provide a list of how the RBT did not meet the requirements.

1. How should the RBT discuss this situation with the behavior analyst regarding the final verification form that they need completed?
2. What are some components of effective supervision that the behavior analyst should engage in so that this situation does not occur in the future?
3. Should the behavior analyst be reported to the BACB for failure to sign the final verification form?

## Section 4 Collaboration Techniques for Professional Communication

Collaboration among professionals from different disciplines will more than likely need to occur at some point in one's professional experience. Often, the lack of collaboration on a behavior analyst's part can be a common misconception among other disciplines. It has been heard that behavior analysts are not accommodating, unwilling to hear other approaches, and put up invisible walls at the thought of talking to others outside of the field. However, it is important that these misconceptions do not creep into a behavior analyst's practice and instead successful collaboration occurs among various disciplines. More than likely, a behavior analyst will cross paths with another member from another discipline (i.e., physician, educator) at some point during their professional careers. By engaging in appropriate and professional activities, meetings, and conversations

together, client outcomes can be obtained and the client's best interests can be at the forefront of treatment planning.

Per the Ethics Code, behavior analysts are to work with colleagues from other professions yet within the profession of behavior analysis (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). This enables behavior analysts to act on behalf of the high standards that have been set forth within the field. Additionally, behavior analysts should respect cultural differences, legal, regulatory, and policy barriers, limit the use of jargon in interactions, and determine the appropriateness of nonbehavioral treatments (Broadhead et al., 2018).

## **Cultural Differences**

When defining culture, one can encompass philosophical assumptions, guidelines, and research that embodies an area or subarea within the field (Broadhead et al., 2018). In an effort to respect cultural differences, the first step is to learn about the differences that exist. Behavior analysts should be aware of their own cultural values and learning histories and how they can impact their interactions with others and the treatment that is delivered (Britton et al., 2021). The backgrounds and views of others should be valued and appreciated. This will allow a behavior analyst to continue to move forward with understanding how the recommendations of other disciplines and professionals can help support the larger goal of guiding treatment for an individual diagnosed with a disability.

When working with someone from a different culture or background (i.e., religion, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation), it is important to consult and collaborate with other behavior analysts to gain insight into programming needs or clarification regarding conversations had. Behavior analysts should refrain from engaging in harassing or disparaging remarks and instead act with a level of professionalism when interacting with others from various backgrounds. Furthermore, behavior analysts may need to seek out professional development opportunities that discuss cultural awareness and equity. If a behavior analyst encounters a personal problem that may interfere in a professional relationship or service delivery for an individual, the behavior analyst should evaluate and self-reflect on their own circumstances and assist with securing someone else to provide the services.

Behavior analysts also have an obligation to promote an ethical culture, even within the organization in which they are employed. An organization should be evaluated on their practices and how they relate to professional development, supporting an ethical

culture, collaborating with other professionals from different disciplines, and promoting awareness of cultural differences (Britton et al., 2021). However, some organizations may lack direction or expertise in how to successfully integrate all of these needs into their policies. Therefore, it starts with an organization's leadership team. Those that are in leadership positions within an organization should be viewed as role models by other employees in the organization. These individuals should act with integrity, behave in an ethical manner, and have the confidence to report other employees that do not engage in the same behavior. By having a leadership team that models and supports practices that elicit ethical responses, then the environment within the organization can be one where the most common ethical violations can be avoided (Britton et al., 2021).

Therefore, when interacting with other professionals from various disciplines, it is important to understand the different cultures that may be encountered during treatment planning. Within each culture exists previously arranged social contingencies that describe and encourage the use of collective ideals among others when in a group setting (Broadhead et al., 2018). When two different cultures or professionals from different disciplines combine to collaborate on treatment options for individuals, it is ideal that both parties determine what the overarching goals of treatment would be. Within this agreement on treatment goals, each professional can then work together to use their expertise to determine methodologies for obtaining successful criteria and treatment outcomes. Each professional will need to understand how their own recommendations fit into the overarching goals of treatment, realizing the perspectives of each discipline. In the end, each professional may realize that they have the same methodologies or outcomes that they are trying to obtain but may be using different terminology. Therefore, it is important for behavior analysts to respect cultural differences as an avenue for enhancing interdisciplinary collaboration.

## **Legal, Regulatory, and Policy Barriers**

When engaging in interdisciplinary collaboration, various barriers should be taken into consideration. Legal, regulatory, and policy barriers may exist within each discipline that could inhibit effective collaboration if not known to others. Each interdisciplinary professional may have their own set of guidelines or regulations that they need to follow within their field. When communicating with one another, not all members of the conversation may be aware of these barriers, and it is important to realize that someone else's guidelines may not align with a behavior analyst's own set of guidelines.

For example, special educators have various legal requirements that they are to follow. One such legal obligation is that they are required to provide free and appropriate education to students. This obligation is based on legislative policy and case law, all of which special educators have to follow. Behavior analysts do not have these specific requirements to follow. It is important for a behavior analyst to understand the constraints that may occur when attending a meeting where school personnel are present. School personnel may recommend that a student receive educational support in a manner that the behavior analyst does not feel like it is meeting the individual's needs. In this situation, the behavior analyst should become knowledgeable on the support that can be provided from the school system within the constraints of a free and appropriate education. Teachers have limited resources available to them, and they have to be able to provide services to all students. By recognizing these limitations, the behavior analyst can work collaboratively with school personnel to determine a solution within the constraints that they are faced with.

## **Use of Jargon**

Behavioral programs should be described in an understandable way (Britton et al., 2021). The field of behavior analysis encompasses an enormous amount of terminology that other disciplines do not readily know or understand. While technical terms demonstrate precision and knowledge within one's field, it can hinder the collaboration efforts put in by behavior analysts if they are not aware of the detrimental effects that it can have.

One effect that the use of jargon can have on collaboration is that it can be confusing to others. When learning new information, if the terms and processes used are not defined so that they are clear to the learner, the information will never be absorbed and learning will not occur. The same thing occurs when jargon is used during collaboration efforts with individuals that are affected by treatment or those that behavior analysts are in collaboration with. Overusing jargon can cause misunderstandings and confusion among the parties involved.

Additionally, when a behavior analyst utilizes jargon, it can cause a separation from others resulting in alienation from the treatment team (Broadhead et al., 2018). In order for other disciplines to accept behavior analysis and to be active listeners to the processes that surround the field, the collaborating behavior analyst needs to be accepted by the treatment team. This acceptance allows fellow treatment team

members to willingly participate in collaboration efforts and see the behavior analyst as a colleague with valuable contributions to be made.

Ultimately, behavior analysts should work to ensure that the language they use is fully understandable to those they communicate with. Technical terms should be substituted to easier understood words. This does not mean that every technical term has to be replaced when collaborating with others. However, behavior analysts should be cognizant of the wording they select and how they communicate to other disciplines so that they are not alienated or misunderstood when engaging in collaboration efforts.

## **Nonbehavioral Treatments**

Behavior analysts are ethically responsible for ensuring that the implementation of any treatment should be discouraged from the use of harmful practices. A treatment is considered to be harmful when it puts an individual at risk for reduced functioning (i.e., physical, behavior, psychological) when compared to treatment levels prior to the intervention being implemented (Broadhead et al., 2018). Additionally, treatment can be viewed as harmful if little or no gains were achieved and time was taken away from other potentially viable options for treatment that could have concluded with greater gains made for the individual. At times, treatments that are not evidence-based have been applied when they have been known to not be effective or treatments that are evidence based have been misapplied or misused.

It is important for behavior analysts to understand that just because a treatment option is nonbehavioral, it does not mean that it is ineffective or even harmful to the individual being affected by the treatment. It also does not mean that a treatment is not evidence-based. More and more research is being conducted that shows the use of nonbehavioral treatments as effective interventions (Broadhead et al., 2018). Therefore, it is key for a behavior analyst to not use these terms interchangeably as it might result in the denial of an effective approach solely based on a misapplication of terminology.

When collaborating with other professionals in various disciplines, immediately rejecting a nonbehavioral treatment simply because it is nonbehavioral can be counterproductive when determining treatment options for an individual. Trust and respect can be diminished among collaborators, and the motivation to work with an individual that outright disregards a treatment option can be reduced so that other professionals do not want to engage with behavior analysts. This can create conflict between a behavior analyst and other members of the treatment team, reducing collaboration efforts and

eventually leading to effecting the overall treatment of the individual needing services. A behavior analyst should always act in the best interest of their client and by outright denying treatment options as viable, this does not maintain the standards of behavior analysis and the ethical guidelines that behavior analysts are to adhere to.

This leads to further conversation needing to be had regarding when it is acceptable to deny a nonbehavioral treatment option as being viable. This can be a tricky time for behavior analysts to navigate as each situation is unique and has to be evaluated on an individual basis. A behavior analyst should look at all of the available evidence that coincides with a nonbehavioral treatment option and how this aligns with the context that the treatment is being recommended within (Broadhead et al., 2018). Additionally, a client's values, their preferences, and even their characteristics should be taken into consideration. The individual being affected by treatment and their stakeholders should be able to choose between treatment options that are presented and discussed with them. If these considerations are not included into the discussion surrounding nonbehavioral treatment options, then a behavior analyst should act in the best interest of their client and advocate for the needs of the individual. Consideration should be taken if a behavior analyst decides to question a colleague from another discipline as this can affect their perception and trust of the behavior analyst's professional capabilities (Broadhead et al., 2018). Behavior analysts should always keep in mind that nonbehavioral interventions can be effective, and they should remain open minded when discussing such intervention methods.

As it has been noted, it is important for behavior analysts to respect cultural differences, legal, regulatory, and policy barriers, limit the use of jargon in interactions, and determine the appropriateness of nonbehavioral treatments when collaborating with professionals from other disciplines (Broadhead et al., 2018). Behavior analysts will come in contact with various disciplines throughout their career paths, and continued growth should occur in the area of collaboration, not only to expand on the importance of behavior analysis within other disciplines but to also guide treatment options for individuals needing services. By understanding some of the barriers to effective collaboration among disciplines, behavior analysts can be more cognizant of their interactions and expand their knowledge on how to successfully communicate in these situations.

## **Discussion of Applicable Ethics Codes**

Per the Ethics Code for Behavior Analysts, there are various ethical standards that should be evaluated when collaborating with other Professionals (Behavior Analyst Certification Board, 2020). These should be adhered to as each interaction occurs and discussions are had regarding treatment options for individuals.

### **1.07 Cultural Responsiveness and Diversity**

*Behavior analysts actively engage in professional development activities to acquire knowledge and skills related to cultural responsiveness and diversity. They evaluate their own biases and ability to address the needs of individuals with diverse needs/backgrounds (e.g., age, disability, ethnicity, gender expression/identity, immigration status, marital/relationship status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status). Behavior analysts also evaluate biases of their supervisees and trainees, as well as their supervisees' and trainees' ability to address the needs of individuals with diverse needs/backgrounds.*

### **1.08 Nondiscrimination**

*Behavior analysts do not discriminate against others. They behave toward others in an equitable and inclusive manner regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender expression/identity, immigration status, marital/relationship status, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or any other basis proscribed by law.*

### **1.10 Awareness of Personal Biases and Challenges**

*Behavior analysts maintain awareness that their personal biases or challenges (e.g., mental or physical health conditions; legal, financial, marital/relationship challenges) may interfere with the effectiveness of their professional work. Behavior analysts take appropriate steps to resolve interference, ensure that their professional work is not compromised, and document all actions taken in this circumstance and the eventual outcomes.*

### **2.10 Collaborating with Colleagues**

*Behavior analysts collaborate with colleagues from their own and other professions in the best interest of clients and stakeholders. Behavior analysts address conflicts by*



*compromising when possible and always prioritizing the best interest of the client. Behavior analysts document all actions taken in these circumstances and their eventual outcomes.*

Behavior analysts should work toward gaining the knowledge and skills needed as they relate to cultural responsiveness and diversity. They should also continually evaluate their own biases and the biases of their supervisees as they plan to meet the needs of the individuals they provide services to. Cultural responsiveness delineates that behavior analysts need to be able to learn from other individuals from different backgrounds and that they should also respect individuals from different cultures than their own (Bailey et al., 2022). This does not only refer to learning and respecting other professionals, but it also entails learning and respecting clients, their parents, employees and even more. The differences of others should be acknowledged by behavior analysts and taken into consideration in all aspects of collaboration, discussions, and treatment planning.

When looking at treatment planning, goals and skills in acquisition should be targeted for an individual that envelopes their cultural background. Each treatment plan should be individualized to the client receiving services and these cultural indications are to be included in the process. Programs that are the same from one individual to the next should not be used, and instead, embrace a client for their individuality and develop programming based on their needs.

Continuing with the conversation regarding one's culture, a behavior analyst should also develop a sense of cultural humility. Cultural humility involves a behavior analyst evaluating their own cultural identities and beliefs (Bailey et al., 2022). This includes developing an understanding of how the contingencies affect responding for the clients and stakeholders that a behavior analyst works with so that a behavior analyst can respond more effectively to questions and concerns.

Furthermore, behavior analysts should evaluate their own biases and skill set to determine if working with an individual from a different background is within their scope of competence. There are several recommendations that Bailey et al. (2022) have outlined for evaluating one's own biases that should be taken into consideration. A behavior analyst should identify their own biases through conversations and evaluation with peers. Peers provide a reasonable outlet to bounce ideas off of and are able to possibly see biases that an individual may not be aware of. Additionally, a behavior analyst should consider different scenarios from the perspective of a person being stereotyped. By taking into consideration how others may feel, this may allow a behavior analyst to see a different perspective on how to handle a situation. Also, prior to

engaging in a conversation with other people from different groups or backgrounds, a behavior analyst should take a moment to stop and reflect so that reflexive behaviors can be reduced. Furthermore, individuals should be evaluated based on their individual characteristics and not the characteristics or stereotypes that overshadow a particular group. Lastly, organizations should welcome and support the inclusion of individuals from different backgrounds and cultural groups.

When interacting or meeting with a family for the first time, a behavior analyst should inquire as to the linguistic needs of the family requesting services. If a family does not speak the same language as the behavior analyst or requires an interpreter, it is important to know this information prior to meeting the family or individual. Language and culture directly impact client outcomes (Dowdy et al., 2021). Providing instruction or consultation services in a language that is not the primary language of the individual may result in the exhibition of challenging behaviors or diminished client progress (Dowdy et al., 2021). Therefore, by communicating through use of an interpreter or in the individual's primary language, some of these challenges may be mitigated. There are several points to consider when a behavior analyst uses an interpreter. The behavior analyst should explain any technical terms that are used in the conversation, speak in simplified sentences, and allow plenty of time when interacting or having meetings (Dowdy et al., 2021). Additionally, a behavior analyst should communicate directly with the client by use of eye contact and body orientation instead of communicating directly with the interpreter. The behavior analyst should also be prepared to repeat anything they have previously said. Lastly, the behavior analyst should consider having the interpreter position themselves next to or slightly behind the client so that this encourages eye contact to be maintained between the behavior analyst and the client (Dowdy et al., 2021). Each of these points should be considered when using someone to assist with communication needs during interactions.

Behavior analysts should also communicate using an active listener approach. Questions should be asked surrounding the individual that is requesting services as well as their needs and feelings. This will also require effort from the behavior analyst in that they will need to pay attention to the answers provided to the questions so that they can either respond or react appropriately. It should be noted that the interaction between the behavior analyst and the client and stakeholders should be centered around person-centered planning (Bailey et al., 2022). Preferences and priorities of the individual being affected by services should be discussed, and the cultural significance of the behaviors needing to be addressed should be determined. It is important to keep the focus on

respecting the culture of other individuals while also ensuring that the individual receiving services is not at risk for harm of any sort.

As the ethics concerning collaborating with others are examined, it is ideal to emphasize that behavior analysts are not to discriminate against others. Discrimination can occur inadvertently, so it is important for behavior analysts to understand the different ways that discrimination can occur when interacting with others. Discrimination can occur when a behavior analyst does not provide the same quality or level of service that they normally would to an individual based on their race, ethnicity, age, disability, or skin color (Bailey et al., 2022). An example of this could be when a behavior analyst does not ensure treatment fidelity among the staff providing services or considering the values that an individual receiving services may have. Additionally, a behavior analyst may discriminate against supervisees. Staff may not be awarded the same amount of work hours, supervision sessions could be canceled, or inadequate feedback could be provided that does not enhance staff performance. A behavior analyst may also make comments regarding religious holidays and the need for accommodating this time off for a supervisee of a different religion. Another way that discrimination could occur is when a behavior analyst that is in an administrative position treats other behavior analysts underneath them in a derogatory manner or does not approve time off, leave, or provide company benefits based on an employee's age, marital status, skin color, or ethnicity. A behavior analyst may also hire staff that are of the same skin color or race. There are numerous ways that a behavior analyst could engage in discriminatory practices. Therefore, behavior analysts should be cognizant of their actions and the words they use to ensure fair practices for all members of an organization, clients, and stakeholders.

Behavior analysts should engage in self-monitoring practices of personal biases when making decisions regarding a client, stakeholders, employees, or other individuals within an organization (Bailey et al., 2022). Also, a behavior analyst could ask a close friend to help them identify any biases that they are aware of and help the behavior analyst to understand how their actions can be perceived as a bias. Steps should then be taken by the behavior analyst to remedy any personal biases that may exist so that effective treatment and interactions can continue to be had. Additionally, behavior analysts should self-monitor their performance as it relates to any personal challenges that may exist in their life. Some personal challenges that may exist include the death of a family member, alcohol addiction, or even a divorce. If these events occur, a behavior analyst should make every effort to have their work covered if the event could negatively affect their work performance (Bailey et al., 2022).

Collaboration with others is vital when ensuring the best interest of clients are met and effective communication occurs. It can be difficult for a behavior analyst to collaborate with others when their views do not align or treatments that are not evidence-based are encouraged for implementation. Therefore, behavior analysts have to be diligent about removing personal biases and refrain from discriminating against others, ensure that treatments proposed are effective and do no harm to the individual receiving the services, and consider the cultural beliefs and values that encompass others.

Throughout this discussion, it is important to understand that there are several factors that can contribute to a practitioner's ability to engage in ethical decision-making skills. Behavior analysts should first recognize the viewpoints that are surrounding the intervention techniques that they are implementing. This is so that the concerns that are expressed within the community, from other professionals, and from individuals affected by the treatment can be heard and their perspectives understood and taken into consideration. Then, a behavior analyst should evaluate the factors that can contribute to ethical decision-making skills and how those factors can be mitigated or analyzed to diminish any risk that may be involved. Thirdly, a behavior analyst should determine a system to use for teaching and maintaining ethical behavior within their practice so that they can continue to move forward and abide by all ethical guidelines established within the field. Lastly, collaboration should occur among other disciplines, stakeholders, and individuals so that a client centered approach can be utilized when implementing treatment interventions and engaging in dialogue.

## **Section 4 Personal Reflection**

How have cultural differences affected your work environment?

Can you think of a time when interdisciplinary collaboration occurred that had successful outcomes?

Have there been constraints within another discipline that you have collaborated with that have affected services for an individual receiving treatment?

Have you witnessed a misunderstanding of information that has been relayed to others as a result of jargon that was used?

When have you had to simplify technical terms so that treatment options could be understood by others?

What are some nonbehavioral interventions that have been recommended to individuals you have come in contact with previously?

What is an example of discriminatory behavior that has occurred within your work environment?

## Section 4 Key Words

Collaboration - engagement in professional activities with another professional in an effort to improve outcomes in treatment conditions

Culture - philosophical assumptions, guidelines, and research that embodies an area or subarea within a field

Cultural humility - an individual evaluating their own cultural identities and beliefs

Cultural responsiveness - learning from other individuals from different backgrounds and respecting individuals from different cultures than one's own culture

Jargon - certain words or expressions that are used within a group that may be difficult for others to understand

## Section 4 Case Study Review #1

A behavior analyst, Susan, was recently hired to work at a school setting with one other behavior analyst, Robert, who was already on board with the organization. Susan and Robert begin to collaborate with one another, and Robert discusses training objectives with Susan so that Susan can learn the role of her new position. The two behavior analysts seem to be working well with one another, to the point that Susan shows Robert the tattoo she just got on her arm of different lines that contain the colors of a rainbow. The next day, Susan reports to work and asks Robert to meet with her so they can discuss a case at the organization. Robert tells Susan that his day is filled with meetings and that he will be unable to meet with her. Susan then asks Robert if they can meet on a different day. Robert tells Susan that he will be unable to meet with her and that she should start seeking guidance from someone else in the organization as he can no longer work with her due to her sexual orientation.

1. How should Robert handle the situation with Susan?
2. What are ways that personal biases can be evaluated so that they do not interfere

with service delivery?

3. How should Susan handle the bias that is being demonstrated toward her in the work environment?

## Section 4 Case Study Review #2

A behavior analyst owns their own contracting business so they can provide behavior analytic services to a variety of organizations. A group home setting calls the behavior analyst and asks the behavior analyst to come to the group home to see if they can offer advice on how to handle certain behaviors that an individual is exhibiting. The behavior analyst arrives at the group home setting and meets with the team leader at the group home. The team leader describes the behaviors in detail and provides information on how the staff have been handling the behaviors in the past. The behavior analyst then tells the team leader that they should really look into implementing a token economy with this individual as this has proven to be an effective intervention with other individuals with similar behaviors.

1. Are there steps that the behavior analyst should have taken first prior to offering guidance on the individual's exhibition of behaviors?
2. How should the behavior analyst have handled this situation when asked to offer advice on a situation concerning a client whose behaviors they have not observed?
3. Is the behavior analyst allowed to offer advice to the team leader regarding this situation, why or why not?

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