

Supporting Employees on the Job- Transcript

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Lynda Leach, Facilitator: Welcome everybody to the CRP-RCEP Region V teleconference today with Sue Ann Morrow. I am Lynda Leach at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana and Sue Ann is a nationally known presenter and trainer in supported employment, positive behavior supports, management of employer, employment services, and leadership issues in rehabilitation. She will be presenting a series of workshops for us on this very same topic this spring.

Sue Ann Morrow: Thank you, Lynda and thanks everyone for joining us. What we want to do today is to try to highlight some of those things we will talk about in these spring and summer workshops.

The first thing that we're going to look at is how to support employees on the job. You have several options once you have found the person a job. The issue becomes supporting them to make sure that they are successful. The questions boil down to, "What do you do?", "How do you do it?" and "Who should do it?" Within those three questions, you have a range of opportunities, a range of options, a balancing, if you will. We want the person with a disability to have a good job match and to be included in the workplace. I know some of you have had a lot of experience with this. That's a whole piece of what we get from work and we want to make sure the people we are supporting get that from work too.

On slide number three — "What do you do?", "How do you do it?" and "Who should do it?" Should you use what's there or should you bring in something new or will there be a combination? To help us make that, there are some things we need to think about before we even start looking at how we are going to support a person.

On slide number four — Support Consideration. We have to look at the individual. We have to look at what the capacity of the business is, we have to look at job demand, the environment, and survey other people in the person's life. Hopefully, you've thought about this as you made your job match. You know, there are some people who don't like to be talked to, they would rather be shown when we talk about characteristics of the individual. Obviously, if you're going to work with a person who is deaf you

wouldn't use a lot of auditory support. You might look at some kind of technical assistance. Maybe working better with a male or a female makes a difference. Make sure you understand that.

Let me make clear something here because every once in awhile people will say, "Well no one has a perfect job, you have to work with what you have." In terms of the person you are supporting you have to work with whatever is on the job site. For example, I live in the country and I have to pay more to have high speed Internet than I would if I used a PC or if I used the Mac in town because we're in the country, but I've made that choice knowing that. Okay? I'll live with it. I didn't know it when I moved here three years ago, but that is one of my choices I have made. So, we as job developers have to know what the person prefers. We have to understand the person when we talk about support consideration, then we can back up from there if we can't meet all those preferences. Part of that is part of the job match. I hope I'm making sense. So we have to think about the individual and preferences.

What's the capacity of the business? What are they willing to do? What can they do? I am sure as we work with different businesses and different organizations, there are some businesses that will do amazing things if they are just asked. Some can't, some won't, so we need to understand demands of the particular job. There is no give and take. You can't be mixing chemicals and screw that up the first time!

The physical and social environments — Perhaps you think this person is going to need a coach, but maybe there is just not room for a coach in the environment. Maybe you think we're going to use some visual cues, but the way the environment is set up, the area is too small. So you have to look at the physical and then the social aspects. Some businesses have an automatic mentor and helper. Some of them have formal mentoring or coaching as part of their normal processes, part of their normal business operation, others don't. You have to understand that and you can take advantage of that.

The last one is the "significant other" support. One thing that we learned early on in employment is what their parents thought was critical. They could make or break the process. When I was doing direct service we had people who lived not only in supported living arrangements, but also group homes, and if that group home didn't support these hours that the person worked, it made it much more difficult to provide the support. So we have to know that before we even begin. So plan with the end in mind. Sometimes we jump right in when we don't have to and sometimes we make matters worse. When need to look at all of the considerations.

If you look at slide five, our options are to use what's there or to add something. Slide 5 — Use what's there. We call that natural supports. That's my way of looking at it. I know there are lots of definitions of natural supports. When we first started looking at natural supports, it wasn't a model. We used to hear people say it's going to be cheaper. We found out it's not always easier and it's not always cheaper. It's not all or nothing. It's also something that is not imposed on employees or co-workers. I've had people come up to me to say his co-worker just can't help him, he can't make him. Well that's right, you don't want to make him. If his co-worker would just go back to the social environment of that job maybe there is someone else who would be willing to help him there. It's not part of the formal structure, but it's informal.

So, if you look at slide number six, you will see “Who, What, When, Where and How.” When you want to decide if what’s there is enough, you have to look at several things. If you can get your mind around these questions, then that will allow you to consistently and systematically look at what’s there. Ask yourself, “When this task is done the typical way, is that going to work for Sally? Is the job going to work? Is who helps her do it going to work? Is the job going to work? Is how the job is performed, is that going to work for Sally? When you ask yourself those questions, if you can say, “Yes,” then you will be successful. Maybe it needs tweeking. Maybe you’ll work with a co-worker. Maybe you’ll be behind the scenes, you might facilitate that, or maybe you’ll just monitor progress.

When you come up with your answers to these questions and you decide, “No, it’s not going to work with Sally,” then you add more. I’m on slide seven – you need to have in your tool box different things you can do to help the person be successful on that job. Different strategies include economic support, structural support, management support, social-skills support, and positive behavioral support. As a quality job coach, employment specialist, you need to have skills in these areas so that when natural isn’t enough you’ll know what to do. You’ll look at the same five questions – “Who, What, When, Where and How.”

When you begin to change things in an environment you again have to ask yourself these questions and take it further. Then you have to say, why is this job done now? Can it be changed? Sometimes it can be changed. Let’s think about a person working in a laundry in a big hotel. There is no reason why she would have to fold all the towels first, or no reason why the beds have to be stripped all at once. The best question—Can it be changed? I think that answer is going to be “yes.” But then, you have to ask yourself the next question, what will happen if we change? This environment isn’t just a vacuum, it’s going to affect other people. You have to go through this problem-solving approach whenever you’re going to add something to the environment. We already went through this approach when you asked yourself is it going to work? Is it going to take care of everything? Is it going to be supportive enough? It is going to take care of everything?

You have to ask yourself the same question. Then add, “Why is something done then, can it be changed, what will happen if?” You got to go back to—what will happen if? You have to make sure that you are not going to be goofing something else up or you’re not changing someone else’s job to such a degree that then they are unhappy. We’re not helping anybody. So we’ve done pretty well about asking ourselves, “Why is it done now and can it be changed?” I want to come back to that.

“Can it be changed?” One of the things we have to be very careful of when going into a job site is relationships and how well you can make the business understand that you can meet their needs and how well you are meeting their business needs. It’s all about that relationship. We’ll say, can it be changed? We go in there, and that’s like the first thing out of our mouth and we talk about job restructuring and job enlargement, job carving if you will. We act as though we have the only answer. We have to remember that we don’t. So first, we need to listen and try to understand why things are done a certain way. Then, “Can I make this better?” We need to think that through and we need to be a little hesitant and we need to make sure we fully understand things.

Slide 8 — Support tends to be about rearranging the environment and not about looking at the person. [gap] Sometimes you can change where the location is, where the job is done. Maybe it’s in an

isolated place and you can move the whole work station. You can change what the person does. You can look at job enlargements or job restructuring. Those are ergonomic solutions, you can change how a job is done, maybe you get new equipment. My colleague talks about a guy who was on a janitorial crew years and years ago, but he was slow. He kept going to the janitor closet to get materials. They got him a janitor cart so he could put all of his materials there at one time and then used that. Instead of going back all the time he just had to go back once.

Just like job enlargement. Maybe a person is sitting at a desk all the time. That could be fatiguing if you just sat at a desk doing the same thing all the time. Maybe you're going to have to have him get up and do something—that can be job enlargement. Give additional tasks to do because what they are doing is fatiguing. That is an ergonomic solution.

We talked about new equipment and new tools. There was an employee of a Marriott who was fairly short and they came up with their own ergonomic solution. They gave her a stool so that when she ran the sheets through the dryer she didn't have to have her arms up so much. It was so fatiguing and hard on her arms and shoulders. They gave her a stool so she was more at eye level. All those are ergonomic supports.

Another support you have is instructional support. You could teach a co-worker to be a little more systematic. Next time you're out, watch how people instruct. My sister-in-law works at a grocery store. I have watched her train a new cashier. It's a wonder anybody learns because usually it's a "do this, do this, do this." So before you ever begin to provide instructional support, you have to look at how and when are you going to begin to back out. How and when are you going to provide less instruction? How and when are you going to move away from the person and give them time to be more attendant? How will I know he/she can do it? Is it 9 out of 10 times, is it 10 out of 10 times, do you do it 3 times in 3 weeks? Is that good enough? You really have to decide how good is good? Nine out of ten days they've done this test correctly, so I can begin to phase out. You need to decide this first.

How am I going to provide instruction? There is total-task training, you can train on partial tasks, you can do forward training, backwards training. You have options available to you and each one of them serves a purpose if you have a person who needs that. "How good is good?" Is it okay if we leave a little smudge on the glass on the restaurant? Is it okay if this can of food is over two inches too far, or is that going to screw things up? So, how good is good, how do you know when it's good enough? You need to look at those things first.

I have some examples up here on slide 11 of natural occurring cues. You have to use them. These are real simple things, but I'll tell you what happens a lot, as a coach we stick ourselves into the instructional interaction and we tell the person we're supporting what to do. I think by the time we get to the end of this section this will make more sense.

The next slide is a task analysis sheet. Not everybody loves it, but I do. The reason I love it is because it has DS—discriminative stimulus. That's just a term for the natural cues. It forces us to identify the DS's (natural cues) in each step of that task. So that when we give our systematic instruction, our systematic prompt, we can say the dishes are on the table, what do you need to do? The dirty dishes

on are on the table, what do you need to do? The numbers refer to the number of steps, if you look at one all the way up to 17. I put that in there to show the test analysis form. A lot of us just use the column that just says “response,” but if you would add to that, what is it within that task, that step of that task, that tells that person what to do next? If we can just add that as part of the prompt sequence, we’d help people learn a lot quicker, but all too often we just tell them, “You need to bus this, put this can here, put this towel here, fold this here,” without having them understand why they are doing it. I hope that makes sense because that’s a real critical part of instruction.

On the next slide we talk about systematic prompting. You have available to you these levels of prompts. An indirect prompt is you ask a question. We’ve got Barbara working in a restaurant, the light on the dishwasher means that you’re supposed to raise the lid and empty the dishwasher. That means it’s done. The DS would be, the light on the dishwasher is on, the indirect prompt would be, “What do you do now?” You can continue through these if that doesn’t give the person enough information, you can go, “The light is on, you need to raise the lid.” The key though is to use the least intrusive to allow the person to be independent. If they can’t do it at that level, then you can go on. Here is what happens typically, if people don’t do it without a direct verbal, “You need to raise the lid.” All we do is get louder and little irritated. If you just watch the world you can see this happening a lot. Saying it louder is not going to help. Giving them more information will.

For most people and most tasks, you can go least to most, meaning going down to indirect clear on down to physically helping the person. That will be 99% of the cases, that’ll be the most effective. There are some examples and cases where you want to go most to least. So you need to have those options. One of the other supports you have is self-management. These are great because we all use them and typically most of the time they don’t have to be faded out. Most of the time you have to look back at this support and the considerations. If you’re the only person, or the person you’re supporting is the only person with any kind of booklet, you might not want to use a booklet picture prompt. This depends on the environment.

We all use calendars, we all use phones that store numbers. These are self-management techniques. I’m sure you all have examples of these—picture prompts, self instruction (you talk your way through it), imagery. These self-management skills have been used with people with all kinds of disabilities, not just people with cognitive disabilities. They’ve been used with people who have brain injuries. You have to go back to the support considerations; you have to make it fit the person, as well as the environment. Picture prompts and picture books are important self-management tools. We were just in a restaurant in Minnesota and it had pictures of what the finished dish should look like. That could be considered a picture prompt. So, with instruction, you talk yourself through it. I saw that a lot when I was teaching in the middle school and elementary school. Imagery is you imagine yourself doing something. I’ve seen it with social skills—imagine yourself saying “hello.” People who are trying to lose weight go to McDonalds and imagine ordering a salad, instead of french fries.

Self-recruited feedback—teach people to ask, “How did you think I did today?” and maybe we’d get some specific examples. Picture books are a lot like picture cues, but maybe they’ll have a day’s tasks in them and that really works nicely if that task changes from day to day.

Taped instructions—this isn't something I have done. It actually came out of Kansas with a biscuit maker. They recorded the instructions and the person would stop the tape, do that part, start the tape, listen, do the next few steps. They made biscuits that way!

Self recording—we've used that a lot. We don't have time to go into it here, but really you can tie it in several ways. You can tie it to reinforcement schedules, you can tie it to the tasks completed—completed appropriately, completed with quality. The thing we have to remember about self-management support is it doesn't teach the task. It helps the person do what they already know how to do. Recorded instructions are going to help the person remember the steps, but if they don't know a half of cup of flour, unless there is another accommodation built in, just taping the instructions isn't going to teach them that. It keeps them doing what they already know. So that's important about self-management support. Our calendar doesn't teach us how to get to appointments on time, it just organizes us so that we get there.

The next slide—social skills support. There is beginning to be more research and literature on “on-the-job social skills.” Most of it deals with having the person be more included and setting the stage so that they can have friends and acquaintances at work. What I was looking at here was how to teach. Social skills are learned behaviors. We learn how to say “hello” to someone because it gets reinforced. They say “hello” back and maybe we get something. So, what I have here on slide 15 is how we used to teach social skills way back when. The research still supports it. This isn't done on site. This will be done back in a small group with maybe one or two staff people. Basically, she talks about why the skill is important, you model it, you role play, you give people feedback and you continue to practice it in a variety of settings wherever that social skill is necessary. You practice it. When we were doing this in Missouri they could practice the social skill of waiting quietly or saying, “Excuse me, I was here first,” or whatever the appropriate social skill would be.

Behavior support — we have that. As a behaviorist, you have to believe that all behavior is learned because then we could help people unlearn it and learn new behavior. Any behavior being maintained is being reinforced. We just quit doing things that we don't get any kind of reinforcement. We're part of the problem so we can be part of the solution to help people learn more appropriate pro-social behavior. We've come along way and actually we're kind of reversing. We used to think that the “why” was not important, and we had a sense of, “I don't like what you're doing—I don't like that you're hitting people or that you're running away, or that you're always late for work.” We just thought, “I don't care why you're doing it, I can manipulate the consequences so much that you won't want to do that anymore.” I can make you change that, and I'm sure some of you have seen behavior plans that were pretty high on punishment and pretty high on manipulating the consequences.

We know that the “why” is important. People behave the way they do to get something, it serves a purpose. People don't misbehave just to misbehave. They need to get something. They misbehave because they don't have the skills to get that need met. You can never just take away behaviors. Slide 18 — You can never take away a behavior without giving the person another need, whatever that need is, whether they need attention or they are trying to tell people to get out of my face, or they are trying to say I hate this job. You have to give them the skills that they need to get that need met, to get attention.

Slide 19 — Behavior management in general. It's a long learning process and by looking at what goes on prior to behavior or what goes on after it, we can help people. Behavior is controlled by what goes on before or after. We can help a person learn and display pro-social behavior. Factors that influence behaviors—you can look at a person's work behavior or inappropriate behavior for the day. The individual, the person—we don't talk about temperament. We used to talk about temperament, but people are just individuals and some things bug people and they respond in different ways. I think we have to remember that when we look at people who are displaying inappropriate behavior. Maybe it's something biological, maybe the person is on medication and it makes them sleepy so they are not really going to get up, maybe they are going to be late for work, maybe they just plain don't feel well. Maybe they are in pain. We have to make sure we have all of these bases covered before we even think of writing a plan to help them change their behavior.

Maybe it's environmental, maybe the setting you're asking the person to work in is too cold, too hot, too noisy, too crowded. We know people with the best coping skills can begin to display inappropriate behaviors if they are hot or tired or uncomfortable.

Grouping or staffing—maybe we're asking a person to be with a person they don't even like. We work with a lot of people who live and work with people they don't even like. My husband and I work with each other too, but we also do things apart, so sometimes we ask people to do things that we would never do. Maybe the person just doesn't like the job. They are trying to tell us, but because we don't listen they are forced to display behaviors that will get our attention. We have to consider the home environment. You have to look at the person's whole environment. For example, I was just in a work site and a man with Down Syndrome had been moved to a different apartment. He also just found out that his mother had cancer. His work performance began to decline. Any of us who just heard news like that and had that change in our life would be distracted. In six months, if his behavior is still like this, then do something, but first we have to understand the situation—he is going to need some help with that. People are people. We all need time to respond to something.

Potential onsite support strategies—slide 21—positive reinforcement, token economy/response cost, graphic feedback, contingency contracting, self-control and self-recording. Positive reinforcement changes the behavior, it makes the behavior increase or at least stay the same. By definition, positive reinforcement works.

Let's look at some of the other considerations for positive reinforcement. Now I'm on slide 23—immediacy, schedules, amount, pairing, proximity, labeling, and expressiveness. Probably the best thing said here is that when you're teaching a person new behavior, you want to supply the reinforcement immediately after the behavior is displayed. You can't wait 20 minutes, you can't wait till the next day. You have to apply it immediately. That's when you might want to go into some self-recording. Let me also say that positive reinforcement works for us all. Reinforcers are going to be different for every person. Running a marathon—the tee-shirt might be why you did it, maybe your name in the paper. One of the problems I think we have is we work with people with pretty significant cognitive disabilities. It makes it more difficult because they haven't had a lot of experiences.

Immediacy and the schedules—How often? How much? All of these things have to be taken into consideration as you develop a reinforcement program.

Now back to slide 24—Token economy response cost, by definition—response cost is punisher. Your response costs you. That’s why it should always be tied with a token economy or some kind of reinforcement system. We’re talking about people who have some success in economy or some kind of behavior issues. Leveling systems are kind of token economy response cost, graphic feedback and that just means giving a person feedback graphically, contingency contracting...making an agreement with a person, negotiating an agreement with the person that if that happens then this will happens. If you do this then I’ll do this. Like self management, it does not teach a person what to do, it helps them want to do it.

Okay, the last slide—Skills in our toolbox. We talked about ergonomic support. I’m on slide 25 now. We’ve talked about instructional support, self management support, social skills support, and positive behavioral support. So when natural isn’t enough, when you need to add to it, you have tools to use.

Lynda Leach, Facilitator: Does anyone have a question for Sue Ann right now? If you do, please use the star 6 keys to unmute.

Caller: What does S^D stand for again?

Sue Ann Morrow: It stands for discriminative stimulus. It means the stimulus that will help the person discriminate. The “S” is at the bottom, the “D” is raise up. Discriminative Stimulus! It’s the one you want to point out to the person that tells them what to do next. It’s the one that says “exit.” What tells us we can’t smoke? It’s the sign with the cigarette and the line through it. What tells us that the elevator is going up? It’s either a sound or an arrow. What tells us to walk across the street...the walk sign. Sometimes we just take for granted that people are paying attention to those things. We really have to make sure we’re helping people see the discriminate stimulus that they should be paying attention to. That help?

Discriminative....it helps with the treatment aid. It helps them discriminate what to do.

Lynda Leach, Facilitator: Are there any other questions for Sue Ann right now? Well that’s fine, Sue Ann, will you do me a favor and give them your contact information?

Sue Ann Morrow: My e-mail is samorrow@hughes.net.

Lynda Leach, Facilitator: Great! Thank you Sue Ann, that was really a great presentation. I want to thank everyone for being on today. Before we leave I would like to remind you of our next monthly teleconference is on February 26th, 2008, entitled “Bridging the Gap through Leadership—The Role of the Rehab Professional and the Transition Process”—our very own John Trach and Kat Oertle from the CRP-RCEP will be presenting. I hope you can join us for that teleconference. Again, thanks everybody for being on and we’ll talk to you later.