

# Selecting a Service Provider to Address Challenging Behavior

## Making Choices, Becoming Empowered



### A Guide for Families

People receiving services through New Jersey's Division of Developmental Disabilities are able to choose the service providers that will best meet their needs, including behavior support needs. This guide provides information and ideas that can help in the selection process.

# Introduction

Challenging behavior can be a barrier to maintaining relationships, gaining employment, participating in recreation or leisure activities, living independently, and realizing meaningful involvement in the community. When severe, challenging behavior may pose a risk to the health and safety of the person or others.

## What Supports are Available to Address Challenging Behavior?

Behavior supports are provided to reduce challenging behavior that impacts quality of life and ability to achieve personally defined outcomes. When challenging behavior occurs, it is important for clinicians, behaviorists, and direct support professionals to work together with people with disabilities and their families to provide the behavior support that will best meet the person's needs.

Behavior supports include:

- a complete assessment of the challenging behavior and underlying causes
- development and implementation of a plan to address the challenging behavior
- ongoing training and supervision of staff and other supporters
- monitoring and reassessment of the plan
- teaching replacement skills/alternate behaviors

All service providers should be able to address and prevent challenging behavior. Based on assessed need, more extensive behavior supports, like assessment, behavior plan development and implementation, are a component of Community Based/Individual Supports and Day Habilitation services.

A separate **Behavioral Support service** may be needed when the person is receiving a service that does not include behavior supports, when the challenging behavior occurs in the home, or when a self-hire is employed. In these instances, a **Behavioral Support Provider** would be selected to:

- complete an assessment
- develop a behavior support plan
- train the family or self-directed employee
- monitor the effectiveness of the behavior support plan
- revise and retrain as needed



# Selecting a Provider to Address Challenging Behavior

## What should we look for in a provider that will meet behavior support needs?

Quality behavior supports will incorporate evidence-based practices, such as Positive Behavior Support and Applied Behavior Analysis, to reduce and prevent challenging behavior. Using a person-centered approach, the behavior supports should connect interventions to the achievement of other life goals your family member has identified. Proper training in effective teaching, relationship building, and positive social interactions should also be made available to all those involved in supporting your family member. The provider must also be available to communicate with you, your family member, the Support Coordinator, and other providers to ensure consistency in addressing challenging behavior.

## How do we choose?

Support Coordinators will identify options for providers based on your family member's needs and what is available in your community. You can also search for approved behavioral supports providers using the Division of Developmental Disabilities' Provider Search database, available online at:

<https://irecord.dhs.state.nj.us/providersearch>

With your family member, think about his or her life, including what he or she wants to achieve and the support needed to make that happen. On page 3, there are questions to help you **Think About Your Family Member's Life.**

Learn more about providers and the behavior support they offer by interviewing those available in your community. You will find suggestions for **Interviewing Providers About Behavior Supports** on page 4.

Before making your choice, think about the providers you interviewed. Page 6 provides questions to reflect on the information learned from interviewing that will help you in **Making Your Choice** about which providers will best meet your family member's behavior support needs.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is founded on the assumption that all behavior is a form of communication, and seeks to understand the purpose that challenging behavior serves for the person. PBS is recommended by the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS) as the most appropriate approach for state service systems to use in supporting people with developmental disabilities to address challenging behavior. Using strategies based on Applied Behavior Analysis, PBS aims to improve quality of life by reducing and preventing challenging behavior through teaching new skills and making changes in a person's environment.



# Think About Your Family Member's Life

Challenging behavior can prevent people from doing what they enjoy and achieving the goals they have for themselves. Before exploring options for providers, you should ask your family member to think about their life. This includes what he or she likes, what is most important, what he or she hopes to achieve, and any behavior that may be preventing this from happening.

The questions below offer a starting point for working with your family member to think about his or her life. If your family member does not communicate with words, you can use your observations and his or her chosen communication method to inform responses. These responses can be shared with Support Coordinators as they work to develop a service plan.

What are some things your family member enjoys doing?

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What challenging behavior might be preventing your family member from doing the things he or she enjoys?

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What are some things your family member would like to achieve?

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What challenging behavior might be preventing your family member from achieving what he or she would like?

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# Interviewing Service Providers About Behavior Supports

## Questions to Ask

Your family member's Support Coordinator will help to identify options for service providers that offer the supports needed. With your family member, you should talk to providers using your answers from page 3.

You should also ask providers about the support they offer to address challenging behavior, training and experience they have, assessments they conduct, how they develop and implement behavior support plans, and how plans are monitored and reassessed.

The questions below can be used to guide your interviews with providers about behavior supports.

## Training & Experience

How much experience do your behavior specialists have in conducting assessments, developing behavior support plans, and training/supervising Direct Support Professionals?

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What behavioral interventions do your staff use and what does that look like?

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Describe the training your staff receive.

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## Behavioral Assessment

How will you assess the factors that may be causing my family member's challenging behavior?

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What can we expect from the assessment?

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How will you incorporate feedback from my family member and me throughout the assessment process?

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# Interviewing Service Providers About Behavior Supports

(continued)

## Behavior Support Plan Development & Implementation

How will the assessment be used to inform my family member's behavior support plan?

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How will my family member's needs and preferences be included in the plan?

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What supports and strategies will be used to implement the behavior support plan?

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How will my family member's Direct Support Professional(s) be trained and supported to implement the behavior support plan?

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How will my family be informed about the plan and supported to implement it?

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## Plan Monitoring & Reassessment

How will the behavior support plan be monitored to ensure that it is working for my family member?

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If a support plan is not working for my family member, how will this be addressed?

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A list of questions to learn more general information about service providers is available in "Selecting a Service Provider: Making Choices, Becoming Empowered." This resource is available through The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities.



# Making Your Choice

## What did you think of the providers you interviewed?

Take time to review the answers you received when you interviewed providers with your family member. It can be helpful to discuss these with your family as a whole, your family member's Support Coordinator, and others that know your family member best. The questions below can be used to help you decide.

Which providers did you interview?

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Which provider understood what is important to your family member and what he or she hopes to achieve?

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Which provider was best able to help you understand the process of assessment and building a plan?

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Which provider would make sure to include feedback from you and your family member in completing the assessment?

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Which provider had the training and experience to address your family member's behavior support needs?

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Which provider's interventions will best meet the needs of your family member?

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Which provider will be most effective in the development and implementation of the behavior support plan?

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## Submitting Your Selection

You or your family member should let the Support Coordinator know once a decision has been made on the provider that will best meet their needs. The Support Coordinator will work quickly to confirm that the supports offered will meet your family member's needs and the provider is available to provide these supports. The provider will contact your family member and/or the Support Coordinator within 5 days of learning your family has selected them to provide support.

More information about behavior supports and provider qualifications can be found in the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Developmental Disabilities' Supports Program and Community Care Program Policies & Procedures Manuals, available online at:

[http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/programs/supports\\_program.html](http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/programs/supports_program.html)

<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/services/ccw/>

Additional resources for individuals with disabilities, family members, Support Coordinators, and service providers are available at:

[www.njsupportingcommunitylives.org](http://www.njsupportingcommunitylives.org)

**THE BOGGS CENTER ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**  
*New Jersey's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service*  
*New Jersey's Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Program*

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