

## **Importance of Skill Building**

Skill building plans are guides that help direct support professionals and other professionals engage the person they are supporting in learning specific skills. With positive supports, these skills are typically focused on positive social skills and daily routines. Skill building plans need to reflect the goals and values of the people being supported, and are therefore developed with people based on the values they have identified as priorities in their lives. The process of skill building is important to supporting individuals in achieving their goals. Developing skill building plans is an important step in supporting direct support professionals and other professionals in engaging in skill building activities with people. These skill building plans are an important part of the universal supports provided to people.

## **Developing Skill Building Plans**

### **Core Components of Skill Building Plans**

Effective skill building plans are linked directly to the valued behaviors and routines identified by people or group of people (e.g., roommates, co-workers) and include:

- (a) Information for staff on how to set up the learning session
- (b) An introduction and direct explanation of the valued skill being reviewed
- (c) A rational (“why”) for the valued skill
- (d) Modeling examples and non-examples of the valued skill
- (e) Opportunities to practice the skill with immediate feedback
- (f) A check for understanding
- (g) Strategies to promote generalization of the valued skill
- (h) Ongoing monitoring

### **Linked to Valued Behaviors and Routines**

Identifying valued behaviors and routines is a core element of universal positive behavior support. The first step includes identifying three to five core values a person has about their home or work environment. For example, a person with support in their home might want to create a home environment that is Caring, Safe, and Respectful. The next step is for staff to support the person in identifying the daily routines or settings in which they often engage and are important to and for the person. For example, routines in the home can include getting up and getting ready, mealtime, grocery shopping, and leisure time. Routines in the employment setting can include arriving at work, team meetings, end of shift responsibilities. For each of these routines or settings, the core value is identified. For example, being Respectful during the meal routine in a house with roommates could include an example of taking turns preparing meals. A home or work matrix is a helpful tool for organizing this information.

This is an example of a home matrix where staff supported the roommates in this home in identifying their (a) shared values, (b) shared routines and settings, and (b) specifics examples of what the shared values look like in the routines and settings:

	Cleaning	Meal Prep	Cleaning up After Dinner	Grocery Shopping
Respect	Get chores done on time, before dinner	Say, "thank you". Offer each other compliments on good food.	Honor each other's process, but keep up the timeline.	Tell the other person if you are not going grocery shopping. Watch for other people's feet while driving the cart. Be OK with what the other person picks out.
Kindness	Say, "thank you" or, "that looks good".	Assist each other in looking up new recipes on the tablet.	Ask if help is needed	Learn how to make the grocery list. Do the grocery list together. Pick-up something your roommate might like.
Helpfulness	Maybe get a kudos board. Offer to bring supplies if needed.	Offer to teach each other cooking skills	Rinse your plate. Clear your dishes. Put away someone else's dishes.	Help carry the groceries in from the car. Help make the list.
Communication	Look at the calendar so you don't have to remind each other. Let your great work speak for itself (No need to talk about what you did)	Look at calendar to know what is going on. Learn the likes and dislikes of each other. Ask the likes and dislikes of each other.	Tell each other if you need to switch days.	Tell your roommate if you are not going shopping. Look at the calendar to see whose day it is.

Adapted from Freeman, R., et al. (2021). *Department of Human Services training on organization-wide person-centered practices and positive behavior support*. University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration: Minneapolis, MN.

### Process for Developing Skill Building Plans

Each skill building plan should be linked to the values and behaviors in a matrix. As such, there will be multiple skill building plans for each person, home, and/or employment setting.

**Who develops skill building plans?** Skill building plans should be developed by positive behavior support organization-wide teams or program managers. The skill building plans will then be used by direct support professionals or other professionals directly supporting people (see *Strategies to Support Staff*). Additionally, direct support professionals or other professionals directly supporting people can also develop skill building plans; however, they should be provided with training and coaching to support this process.

**What are the steps in developing skill building plans?** To develop skill building plans, team members or program managers should:

- (a) Identify the matrix being used to develop the plans
- (b) Select a skill building plan template (see Appendix A)
- (c) Identify the behaviors to include in the skill building plan, and if there are any behaviors that can be combined into one skill building plan. For example, Helpfulness (value) during the dinner routine (setting) in a home with roommates being identified as cleaning up after dinner (skill)". Enter the behaviors within the template.
- (d) Complete the Getting Ready for Using the Skill Building Plan section of the skill building template. This section sets the stage for what will be reviewed and how to prepare for using the skill building plan.
  - a. Enter the Value being supported (Value on the Matrix)
  - b. Enter information about the routine or setting for learning (from the Matrix).
  - c. Enter the specific behavior(s) and observable actions associated with the Value and setting or routine (from the Matrix).
  - d. Circle the level of support (tier 1, tier 2, tier 3) and if there is a specific goal being supported by the skill building plan.
  - e. Enter detailed information on how a direct support professional should prepare prior to using the skill building plan to support people. This section should include suggestions on how to share the training, the people who will be involved in the activity, the materials needed to complete the activities, and how much time the activity should take.
  - f. Enter the estimated time it will take to go through the plan
  - g. Enter examples of non-examples of the value(s) being reviewed.
- (e) Complete the Using the Skill Building Plan portion of the template. This section includes the all of the wording and activities the direct support professional will do when engaging with a person during a skill building activity. It is helpful to provide scripts for staff in this section. Staff will often rely on the scripts as they are getting familiar with the skill building plan. Scripts also help with consistency for the person when skill building plans are used by different staff.
  - a. Complete information about the skill(s) being reviewed (Introduce and Explain). This section should be set up to prompt the staff to provide a description of the skill(s), prompts for generating interaction with the person being supported, and suggested responses. This section should also include a description of why these skills are important, and how these skills apply across different domains of life.
  - b. Complete the model section of the skill plan (Show). Enter a range of examples of non-examples of the skill(s) for direct support staff to model. It is important to direct support professionals or other professional using these plans to "sandwich" the modeling activities. They should start by modeling correct examples, move onto folding in a few non-examples with correct example scenarios, and end with a correct example of the behavior(s) being reviewed.
  - c. Complete the Practice section of the skill plan. Use this section for providing role play scenarios and opportunities to practice. It is important for the role play and

practice to take place in the actual setting. If that can't be done, setting up the setting so it is as close as possible to the actual setting is helpful.

- d. Complete the Feedback section of the skill plan. Use this section to include examples of providing feedback to responses that align with the value and examples, as well as suggested wording for when the responses do not align. Include suggestions for (a) providing feedback during a skill building activity and (b) for ongoing feedback (after the skill building activity is complete).
- e. Provide information in the Check for Understanding section. These checks for understanding should take place at the end of the skill building session. Choose verbal, written, or picture responses as well as physical movement to check for understanding.
- f. Enter information in the Promote Generalization: Activities for After the Skill Building Plan section. Add suggestions for (a) reminding people of the skills prior to an activity that would require the skill (e.g., before a meal starts, reminding people to rinse and put away dishes when they are done), (b) observing, and (c) providing specific feedback (e.g., *"I noticed you rinsed your plate, it showed me you were thinking about being helpful."*).
- g. Complete the Revisit section of the plan. This section should include reminders to continue to observe, provide feedback, and reuse the skill building guide when the values and behaviors that were reviewed aren't being seen

## **Strategies to Support Staff**

### **Training**

Onboarding training and ongoing training should include a/an (a) rationale for engaging in skill building sessions with people, (b) overview of the components of the skill building guide, (c) modeling a skill building session, (d) opportunities for staff to practice delivering a skill building plan, (e) immediate feedback during the practice sessions, and (f) opportunities to ask questions.

### **Ongoing Feedback**

Once trained, make sure there are opportunities for program managers or other staff to observe direct support professionals or other professionals providing support facilitate the skill building plan session. This is an opportunity for

### **Provide Resources and Develop Schedules to Use Skill Building Plans**

One way to ensure that skill building plans are used is to make them easily accessible for all individuals providing support. One option is to provide all of the skill building plan on a tablet or device that the individual uses when providing support. Another option is to provide a three-ring binder with all of the skill building plans, resources (see Checklists below), and schedules printed and placed in an easily accessible area.

Having schedules can help make the use of skill building plans become routine. Schedules should include:

*Routine times to use skill building plans:* Included a schedule with the skill building plans will provide a roadmap for staff on when to use the plans. For example, you can develop a monthly schedule for reviewing skill building plans. A monthly schedule would outline when specific skill building plans sessions should take place and the professional(s) responsible for facilitating the session.

*Reminders to review skill building plans based on need:* Data can be used to identify when specific skill building plans need to be revisited. Any schedule should include flexibility for reviewing skill building plans that have already been reviewed and are not currently on the schedule.

### Checklists to Support Use

The following checklists can help staff self-monitor their use of the skill building plans.

#### Checklist: Getting Ready for Skill Building Sessions

Give yourself a check for every step you completed:

	Read the skill building plan you will be using
	Use the Getting Reading for Using the Skill Building Plan section to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get yourself organized</li><li>• Identify when you will be using the skill building plan</li><li>• Identify the location where you will use the skill building plan</li><li>• Gather the materials you will need</li></ul>
	Practice the Show (modeling) section of the skill building plan

#### Checklist: Delivering the Skill Building Sessions

Give yourself a check for every step you completed:

	I <b>introduced and explained</b> the skill
	I <b>showed</b> the skill (modeled the skill) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I showed examples</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I showed non examples</li> </ul>
	I had the person/people I support <b>practice</b> the skill
	I provided <b>feedback</b> during the activity
	I <b>checked for understanding</b> before ending the skill building session
	I followed the scripted skill building plan
	I was able to respond to the person I support when their responses weren't covered by the skill building plan script

### Checklist: After the Skill Building Sessions

Give yourself a check for every strategy you use to follow-up after the skill building session:

	I prompt the skill as a reminder
	I pre-correct the skill in new situations
	I set up opportunities so the person/people I support can use the skill
	I remind the person when they might need to use the skill
	I provide specific positive feedback when I see the person/people using the skill
	I re-teach when I see the person/people not using the skill