



Introduction to Organization-wide Positive Supports

Purpose of this Brief

In the past, leaders in organizations were sending individual staff to trainings hoping that these staff members could share new ideas they learned with everyone else. This approach puts a lot of pressure on one person and does not consider all of the changes that need to be made to put a new practice in place. The purpose of this brief is to describe how organizations can move beyond this train and hope approach to introduce positive supports in an effective manner that will be sustained over time.

What are Positive Supports?

Positive supports are practices that are proven to be effective using research that reports positive outcomes for people who represent the diversity of Minnesota. Positive supports are driven by person centered and culturally responsive values that are monitored over time to make sure they are improving outcomes for the people of Minnesota. Some examples of positive supports include: assertive community treatment, culture of safety, motivational interviewing, positive behavior support, and person-centered practices.

The story in this brief describes how one organization in Minnesota used a team-based approach to introduce positive supports using a three-tiered framework to organize interventions along a continuum of intensity as a way of meeting the needs of each person and improving quality of life. Two practices are described in this brief including positive behavior support and person-centered practices. Person-centered practices include strategies and tools that can help us actively listen to others, nurture meaningful relationships,

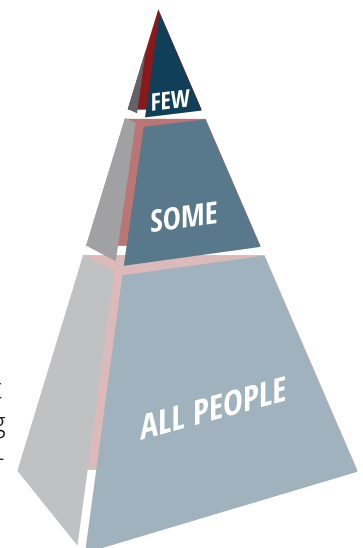
and empower people to achieve their dreams for the future. These practices help us remain focused on the strengths, dreams, and direction of people receiving services.

Positive behavior support is a practice used to prevent behaviors that can interfere with quality of life. All of us will engage in behaviors that interfere with our social and emotional wellness at some time in our lives. Sometimes these behaviors can be dangerous to ourselves or others.

What is the Three-Tiered Public Health Model?

The three-tiered prevention framework was first used in public health settings and later applied to positive behavior support. Tier 1 includes universal strategies for preventing challenging behavior by including everyone within an organization in the planning process. Interventions at Tier 1 are for people receiving services, staff members, managers, leaders, family members and the community.

Tier 1 strategies are easy to implement, focus on prevention, and are used to create positive person-centered settings. Tier 2 includes monitoring and simple strategies for identifying and intervening when some people experience minor challenges in quality of life or interfering behaviors. Tier 3 are more intensive and result in individualized support plans for



the smaller number of people who may need a more complex and comprehensive level of support.

This brief includes a story of one organization in Minnesota that has been implementing positive supports since 2016. Two positive supports were chosen: Person-centered practices and positive behavior support.

Organization-wide Example: Person-centered Practices and Positive Behavior Support

The provider organization in this example serves 77 people and employs 200 staff members in a city of 85,852 and including nearby smaller towns. The services provided include residential and day program support to people with disabilities including intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and those diagnoses with one or more mental illnesses. The organization joined a regional cohort training in 2016 that was funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. The training group this organization was part of was called Cohort 2.

The first step was to form a team within the organization with people representing all of the major roles and people who live and work in the setting. This team attended Cohort 2 trainings and worked on an action plan to put positive supports in place. The team included 12 team members who were involved in planning meetings and 3 staff who facilitated team meetings and coordinated the overall process. There were 30 person-centered coaches training in the organization who provided support to other staff learning to use the person-centered tools. The team has supported people living and working in 5 settings and their staff to identify the important person-centered values for each setting. Strategies for teaching social and emotional skills to staff and people receiving services are implemented and plans for recognizing each other when people observe each other engaging in the valued person-centered behaviors.

Figure 1. Two Positive Supports Targeted for Implementation

Person-Centered Practices

Person-centered Thinking

- Understanding important to and important for
- Person-centered descriptions
- Tools for building relationships
- Understanding different levels for making change

Person-centered Coaches

- Recruited 30 peer coaches
- Coaches share tools with staff

Person-centered Planning

- Picture of a Life training
- Staff trained to facilitate planning

Organizational Strategies

- Change policies to be more person-centered
- Maintain coaches so that staff can reflect and use tools with support

Positive Behavior Support

Universal Strategies

- Teach, promote, model positive social interactions
- Design positive, proactive, predictable environments
- Create consistent responses to problems

Tier 2

- Use a team approach to monitor quality of life and behaviors that interfering with social and emotional wellness
- Identify quality of life challenges early before they become a problem
- Monitor data and intervene at the earliest signs

Tier 3

- Build capacity for individualized PBS facilitation
- Facilitate individualized team problem solving
- Launch PBS based on person-centered plans
- Monitor progress for each individual and meet regularly

Using Data for Decision Making

Positive supports are practices that are assessed regularly using data to drive decision making. The organization spent time working on refining their data systems to be able to use the data regularly in meetings.

Tiered Onsite Evaluation Tool

A first step was to begin using a fidelity tool called the Tiered Onsite Evaluation Tool or TOET. This simple team checklist is used to gather evidence that person-centered practices and positive behavior support are being used in the way they are intended. You can see in Figure 2 that the team started the TOET in 2016 by meeting with trainers and sharing the evidence of their work. Each subsection in Figure 1 has questions related to major categories including forming a team, person-centered practice, positive behavior support, cultural responsiveness, monitoring data, supporting and teaching staff, visibility of positive supports, and the overall total. There are 29 items, with each item receiving a score of: 0= indicating a item has not been started, 1=actions are started but not finished, and 2= the work is completed. This Figure shows the growth over time as the organization worked hard to put positive supports in place.

You can see the progress this organization-wide team made over time in Figure 2. The team also invested time in creating a way to assess incident reports systematically. Although incidents were already being collected, the team trained staff members so that everyone was more consistent in reporting challenges that came up. They talked with staff members about cultural differences that each person has and how this can impact whether a staff person considers a behavior to be interfering with someone's life. This time for reflection is an important way to encourage a culturally informed response when behaviors occur.

The team changed their monitoring process by defining major and minor incidents so that they can intervene early and understand that data better. You can see in Figure 3 that the team decided to track minor challenges separately from more serious incidents that are recorded. The really dramatic decreases in incidents that occurred in 2020 are clear in this figure. It is difficult to assess whether these decreases in incidents shown across years was due to the unique aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic or the interventions implemented by the organization. However, these data clearly show that the organization is headed in the right direction.

Figure 2. Tiered Evaluation Tool (TOET) Data From 2016 to 2020 for the Case Study Example



Figure 3. Decreases in Incident Reports from 2018 to 2020

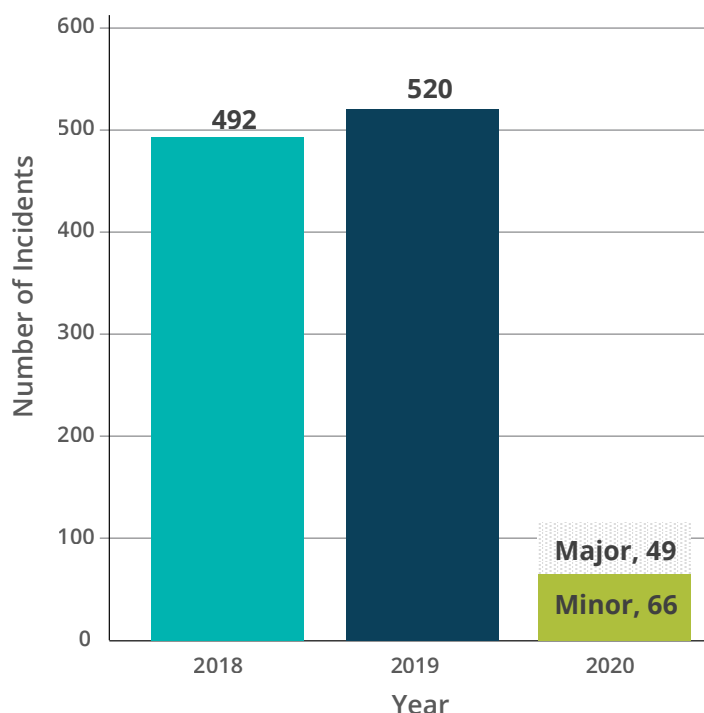
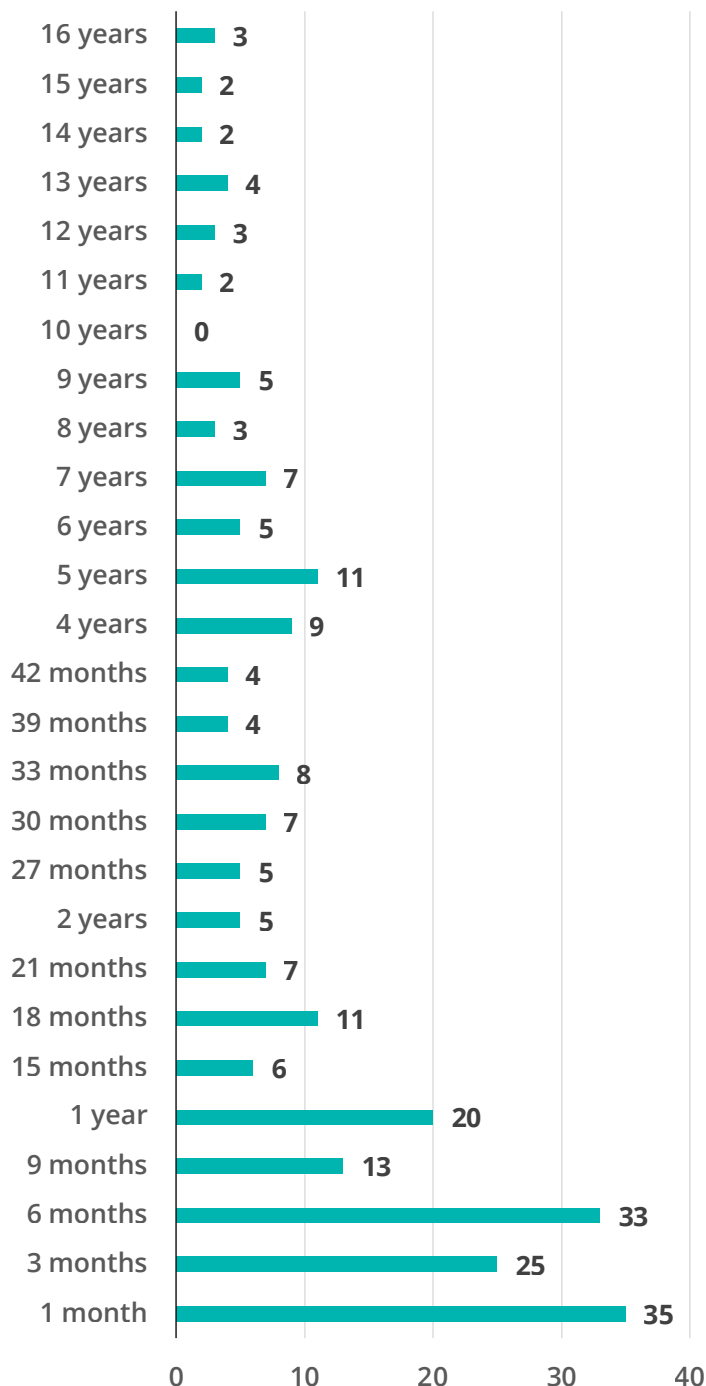


Figure 4 describes staff retention patterns. The team began gathering information about staff retention patterns to understand how to improve efforts over-all. Figure 4 helps the team better understand how long staff members stay in the organization. If positive supports are effective, you would expect staff members may choose to stay because the climate is positive and they are receiving the support they need. The team uses these data to assess whether they are changing the overall climate and to focus on strategies that will improve retention over time.

Figure 4. Staff Retention Data for the Organization

Although this team describes the many different action planning steps that still need to be taken, they have done an excellent job demonstrating how data can be used to guide positive support efforts.



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