

Problem Solving Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

With a collaborator or supervisor, choose a problem and engage in each step of the problem-solving process. Use this form to document your work. Make sure you fully engage in each step and DO NOT jump ahead. Use the questions for each step to assist you with developing an answer.

List the problem-solvers:

Step I: Identify the Problem: Provide a specific description and indicate how you knew it was a problem.

Helpful questions:

1. Are there behaviors missing (i.e., not exhibited) that I would expect to see under similar circumstances (e.g., lack of question asking, no or minimal greeting or closure, no or minimal positive facial expressions and body language)?
2. Have there been subtle or obvious changes in typical behavior or performance (e.g., changes in affect, increased cancellations or call outs, increases in variable responding, increases in some aspect of problem behavior, decreases in skill acquisition)?
3. Are there aspects of the environment that might be unpleasant or undesirable?
4. What things about this problem (e.g., clinical programming, staff performance, therapeutic relationship) make you think that it is going well or poorly?
5. Are there aspects of my culture or the other person's culture that might lead me to misinterpret subtle behavior as an indicator of a problem or overlook subtle behavior as an indicator of a problem?

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Step II: Define the Problem: Ask yourself questions and make observations that help you get at the cause or functions of the problem. Use functional assessment tools such as the Performance Diagnostic Checklist - Human Services (Carr, Wilder, Majdalany, Mathisen, & Strain, 2013) appropriate. List your answers (and any questions besides the ones we have listed below) as numbered items.

Helpful Questions:

1. What exactly does the “problem” look like?
2. For whom is this a “problem” (i.e., who contacts the negative or undesirable outcomes)?
3. Under what conditions does the “problem” occur?
4. What is the typical result of the “problem” occurring?
5. Create a summary statement that defines the core cause or causes of the problem.

Step III: Generate Possible Solutions: Conduct a brainstorming session to generate lots of possible ideas for solutions. Encourage yourself to think creatively and to behave variably. Write down all ideas and do not evaluate them yet.

Helpful Questions:

1. Will a solution to a similar problem from the past work in this situation?
2. If there were no restrictions on time or resources, what things might solve this problem?
3. If we could have a complete re-do of this situation, are there things we would do differently?
4. What possible solutions are related to the likely function of the problem?

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Step IV: Evaluate the Options: Write your most promising solutions in the "solution" row. List the relevant pros and cons of each in the boxes below, placing them in either the "short term" or "long term" row. If one of your solutions is clearly linked to the function from step 2 that is a pro.

Helpful Questions:

1. What are the positive benefits to the critical individuals (e.g., child, family, staff)?
2. What are the risks or possible negative outcomes associated with the solution?
3. How effortful, costly, time-intensive is immediate implementation of the solution?
4. How likely is the option to produce sustained positive effects?
5. How likely is the option to work quickly?
6. What are the barriers to success?
7. Will there be resistance to implementing the solution?
8. Can the environment support sustained implementation of this solution?
9. Does this solution completely address the function of the problem, protect consumers and staff, and match the available resources?
10. What would happen if I did nothing?

Solution

Pro

Con

Short term

Long term

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Solution

Pro

Con

Short term

Long term

Solution

Pro

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Short term

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Step V: Evaluate the Effects of your Solution: Develop a plan to evaluate the effects of your solution.

Helpful Questions:

1. Who will implement the solution, how, and for how long?
2. Who will evaluate the solution and when?
3. How will I evaluate the outcomes of the solution (i.e., did it work or not)?
4. What will you measure? How much change must occur to feel like you have solved the problem?
5. Was the solution effective (i.e., did it produce the desired change, in the desired contexts, in the desired time frame)?
6. Are the positive effects of the solution sustaining?

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7. What were the specific outcomes of the solution (both intended and unintended)?

8. Do I need to modify the solution?

9. Do I need to try another solution?

Notes: