The Individualized Behavior Support Plan Facilitator: Selection, Preparation, and Ongoing Support

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Introduction

This resource outlines guidance for identifying, preparing, and supporting practitioners responsible for facilitating the development and implementation of individualized positive behavior support (IPBS) plans in early childhood Pyramid Model settings. It is designed to increase the likelihood that a responsive team surrounds every child who needs individualized support, engaging in a process guided by a skilled facilitator that honors the family's voice and choice, builds on the child's strengths, and reflects high-quality, evidence-based practices.

Intended Audience

This guidance is for:

- **Systems-level leaders** (e.g., state and program administrators, community implementation teams, regional technical assistance providers) who are working to ensure infrastructure and support for Pyramid Model implementation

- **Program leaders and coaches** in early care and education, early intervention, and early childhood special education who are building internal capacity for implementing the Pyramid Model

This resource supports and guides decision-making related to role definition, professional learning pathways, and long-term planning for establishing and sustaining the Behavior Support Plan (BSP) facilitator role within Pyramid Model implementation. States, communities, teams, and programs are encouraged to adapt and apply these recommendations in ways that align with their local context, priorities, and capacity.

Understanding the BSP Facilitator Role

Who Is a Behavior Support Plan Facilitator and What Do They Do?

A BSP facilitator is someone who guides a team through the IPBS process to develop and implement intensive, or Tier 3, supports with a child who engages in persistent and significant challenging behavior. While the facilitator may coordinate the IPBS process, they do not work in isolation. Their role is to help the team move forward together, make shared decisions, and stay focused on the child's strengths and needs.

Who Should Have This Role?

The person who takes on a BSP facilitator role will vary depending on the setting and the availability of team members. Facilitators are often people who already support others in behavior planning or teaming, such as:

- Pyramid Model practitioner coaches

- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) teachers

- Early Intervention (EI) specialists

- Inclusion or behavior coaches

- General educators or care providers who provide coaching support

- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants (IECMHC)

- School psychologists, social workers, and behavior analysts

- Program administrators with behavior support expertise

What matters most is not the person's title, but their preparation and commitment to intentionally guiding the team through the IPBS process in a collaborative and supportive way.

How BSP Facilitation Is Carried Out

Once initiated, BSP facilitation involves an individualized, strengths-based, family-centered, and data-informed process led by a trained facilitator.

> ### *Process of Individualized Positive Behavior Support*
>
> **Step 1:** Establishing a collaborative team and identifying goals
>
> **Step 2:** Gathering information (functional assessment)
>
> **Step 3:** Developing hypotheses (best guess)
>
> **Step 4:** Designing behavior support plans
>
> **Step 5:** Implementing, monitoring, evaluating outcomes, and refining the plan in natural environments

While specific practices used in each step of the IPBS process may vary across programs, effective facilitation typically includes:

- Informing possible team members of the IPBS process and team member expectations

- Building a collaborative team (with the family as a central partner) to carry out all further steps together

- Developing goals and data collection methods that promote children's learning and engagement, while documenting decreases in challenging behavior

- Coordinating a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) through observations, interviews, and data collection

- Supporting the team in developing shared hypotheses about the behavior's functions

- Guiding the creation of a BSP that is function-informed, trauma-informed, responsive to children's experiences, and grounded in daily routines

- Providing or coordinating coaching or implementation support to help the team use the BSP consistently and with fidelity

- Supporting the team in using progress-monitoring data to reflect on what is working, adjust, and sustain and generalize the plan over time across settings (e.g., home, community)

- Ensuring ongoing communication and coordination across team members, with time for reflection and shared problem-solving

- Gathering team and family feedback on the plan and IPBS process to guide BSP facilitator reflection and ongoing professional growth

Many of these activities can be integrated into existing structures such as Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) teams, early childhood mental health consultation models, or instructional coaching systems so that BSP facilitation builds on what is already in place rather than becoming an added requirement. The goal is to create shared ownership across the adults who know and care about the child.

Family Partnership Throughout the Process

Partnering with families is the heart of the IPBS process. BSP facilitators play an important role in ensuring that families are actively involved in every step of the planning process as valued team members.

- Center family priorities, values, and observations in decision-making

- Offer supports that enable full family participation (e.g., interpreters, visuals, flexible meeting times, communication methods that work for the family) as partners in the process

- Encourage families to help define their hopes and dreams for their child

- Invite families to reflect with the team during plan implementation and revision

- Support the family to adapt and use the BSP in ways that fit their home and community priorities and routines

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Families may also initiate or request BSP facilitation. Programs should make it easy for families to share concerns and access supports early, before challenges escalate.

Facilitator Qualifications and Preparation

Essential Skills and Experience

While the considerations below are not requirements, the most effective BSP facilitators tend to have skills and experience in the following areas:

Core Knowledge, Skills, and Experiences	Examples in Practice
Pyramid Model Framework Knowledge	• Understanding the Pyramid Model, especially Tier 3, and how it connects to universal and targeted supports • Applying Pyramid Model principles to ensure that support plans are not reactive or deficit-based, but instead built through strong partnerships and shared understanding
IPBS Process Principles and Process	• Specific knowledge of IPBS, including the theoretical and values foundations of the approach, functional behavioral assessment, hypothesis development, and behavior support plan development and implementation • Using data to make decisions and helping teams engage in data collection for use in progress monitoring and BSP refinement
Facilitation and Leadership	• Guiding a team-based process that is organized, collaborative, and shared
Family Partnership	• Partnering with families to ensure their priorities and knowledge are included throughout the IPBS process and in the development of the BSP • Supporting the team to engage in planning that centers on the priorities, communication styles, and goals of the child and family
Practical Experience	• History of using the IPBS process with multiple children and experience with adapting the process in different settings and contexts
Inclusive Instruction and Intervention	• Confidently using targeted and individualized strategies to support a child's inclusion in their least restrictive environment (LRE) • Implementing practices that reflect each child's strengths and promote their meaningful participation
Understanding of Stress and Trauma	• Applying trauma-informed thinking to how behavior is understood, how a child and family are supported, and the development of a plan with components to address the child's needs related to trauma
Coaching Skills	• Using coaching strategies (e.g., practice-based coaching) to support others in implementing the IPBS process with fidelity and reflection

Training alone is rarely sufficient to develop a comprehensive understanding of IPBS or to apply it effectively in real-world settings. Many facilitators report that participating in the IPBS process as a provider or team member, supported by a skilled facilitator, is a critical first step. Providers often reflect that completing the process three times with coaching from an experienced facilitator is what helped them truly understand and feel confident using it.

Becoming a BSP facilitator is more than completing a training. Ideally, facilitators have a strong foundation in the IPBS process, developed through their own application and use, guided by reflection and facilitation, before learning to guide others. While this may not always be possible, it is recommended that programs prioritize this foundation when identifying or preparing future BSP facilitators.

Professional Learning Pathways

Becoming an effective BSP facilitator takes time, practice, and support. The process should include learning, applied experience, and opportunities for reflection and growth, guided by a mentor or coach. BSP facilitator preparation should also align with the core principles of high-quality positive behavior support as established through professional (e.g., Association for Positive Behavior Support Practice Guidelines) and federal standards (e.g., Using Functional Behavioral Assessments to Create Supportive Learning Environments).

Additionally, some states (e.g., Minnesota's Standards of Practice: Positive Behavior Support Across the Lifespan) have developed detailed guidance for behavior support planning that includes expectations for how facilitators build respectful relationships with families, understand the child in the context of their everyday experiences, and coordinate with multiple systems of care. These can serve as helpful models for local adaptation.

Initial Training

Initial training for BSP facilitators should be grounded in competency-based learning, with a focus on applying skills in real settings. This training includes guiding teams (while maintaining the role of facilitator, not expert) and supporting collaboration around key practices such as conducting FBAs, developing team-generated hypotheses, creating comprehensive and strengths-based behavior support plans, and developing data tools to monitor fidelity and progress.

Training should reflect evidence-based standards and align with the Pyramid Model framework, as well as relevant state and program guidance. Many programs develop a plan for structured professional development aligned with selected resources and other state-adopted processes.

The training should also include strategies for coordinating care and services across home, early care and education, and community systems. Additionally, professional development opportunities should enable BSP facilitators to learn how to support family-centered planning, connect with wraparound services, and navigate cross-agency and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Programs are encouraged to use data from fidelity tools, family feedback, and patterns in BSP facilitator implementation (e.g., standard practices, strengths, or challenges) to review and revise their training materials and processes annually. This review may also help identify additional professional learning needs, including those of provider teams, who might benefit from more focused training on universal and targeted supports, thereby reducing over-reliance on intensive individual interventions.

Practice with Coaching or Mentorship

BSP facilitators benefit from structured opportunities to practice guiding the IPBS process, reflect on their facilitation skills, and receive feedback from experienced mentors or coaches. The type and amount of support needed may vary based on available resources, the facilitator's prior experience, the duration of coaching, and their role within the program. Various forms of coaching or mentorship (e.g., systems coaching, team-based coaching, or practice-based coaching) might be provided to facilitators to promote their growth in skills.

The IPBS process involves a series of evidence-based steps that BSP facilitators should follow to achieve positive outcomes. More information about each step can be found in NCPMI's Resource Collection: Providing Intensive Individualized Intervention.

While the steps remain the same across settings, the specific tools, resources, and activities used to carry out each step may vary based on the program's context. For example, Step 1: Establishing a Team and Defining Goals should include partnering with families as valued team members and defining the child's behavior in observable, measurable terms. However, the way these actions are carried out and the forms or documentation used will likely differ from one program to another.

Process fidelity refers to ensuring that each step of the IPBS process is completed as intended, including all critical activities within each step. Programs have flexibility in how they implement each step and can use the tools, forms, and resources that work best for their staff, families, and systems, as long as the essential sequence and activities of the process are maintained.

Programs are most successful when they create program-specific IPBS guidance, oftentimes in the form of a guide, that outlines the activities for each step, aligned with their team roles, resources, and systems. This guide can help providers learn how to use the process during coaching and ensure fidelity when implementing it with teams. The guide becomes a practical tool for implementation and coaching.

The table below presents an example of a coaching process planned for a provider who has already completed IPBS training and has previously participated as a team member in all steps of the IPBS process. Now, they are shifting into the role of BSP facilitator and, for a year, will continue to learn how to guide others through the process with the support of a coach. The activities below are meant to support their growth over time.

Example Coaching Process for BSP Facilitator

Activity	Purpose of Activity	Who Is Involved	Suggested Timeline	Notes / Next Steps
Establish a relationship and connection (coach and new facilitator), review the purpose of BSP facilitation, and plan for BSP facilitator coaching	Revisit expectations and responsibilities of BSP facilitation that are aligned with the Pyramid Model; Agree on responsibilities of the coach and the new facilitator	Coach, new facilitator	Month 1	
Observe a full BSP facilitation process in the development and implementation of an IBSP	Learn how an experienced facilitator guides a team from start to finish	Coach facilitates, new facilitator observes	Months 1–2	

Activity	Purpose of Activity	Who Is Involved	Suggested Timeline	Notes / Next Steps
Co-facilitate the BSP process	Practice leading parts of the facilitation process with guidance and shared leadership	Coach and facilitator collaborate	Months 2–4	
Reflection and support check-In #1	Reflect on strengths and needs using a self-assessment or fidelity tool	Facilitator and coach	End of first facilitation	
Lead a BSP facilitation with coaching	New facilitator takes the lead with BSP facilitation with regular observations and coaching check-ins	Facilitator leads, coach supports	Months 5–8	
Reflection and support check-In #2	Identify areas for continued growth and confidence in supporting others more independently	Facilitator and coach	After the second facilitation	
Share experience with peers	Present problems of practice and/or process reflections in the BSP facilitator Community of Practice (CoP)	BSP Facilitator, peer group	Month 9 or 10	
Final reflection and growth planning	Review facilitator strengths, identify ongoing supports, and plan next steps	Facilitator and mentor coach	Months 10–11	
Practice supporting a peer	Practice mentoring or co-facilitating with another provider, if ready	Facilitator and a peer, with coach support	Begin during Month 12 (optional)	

Ongoing Support and Professional Learning

To sustain high-quality BSP facilitation, programs and systems can consider providing continued opportunities for facilitators to connect, reflect, and learn with others in similar roles. Personalized, ongoing supports can help BSP facilitators strengthen their practice, stay grounded in family-centered values, and collaborate and problem-solve with peers as they implement the IPBS process with teams.

Communities of Practice (CoPs)

Facilitators benefit from opportunities to learn with and from their peers, and multiple states, communities, and programs have reported that CoPs are a valuable, ongoing source of support for BSP facilitators. CoPs provide a platform for facilitators to share experiences, reflect on challenges, and further develop their skills in facilitating the IPBS process. Examples and ideas for how CoPs have been organized include:

- Regular CoPs for current and hopeful facilitators

- Focusing on real-world BSP facilitator problems of practice, such as coaching dilemmas, adapting plans for child and family contexts, or supporting cross-role or cross-agency teaming

Example Community of Practice Structure and Agenda: This sample agenda is from a BSP Facilitator CoP initially organized by a Community Implementation Team. The CoP brings together BSP facilitators in practice and in training to reflect, problem-solve, and learn with and from one another. Over time, BSP facilitators have taken on full ownership of planning and leading the CoP, supported by the time and resources built into their roles.

Sessions typically run 60 to 90 minutes and are held virtually once per month. Each meeting follows a predictable structure:

- Grounding in shared values

- Welcoming new members

- Problem of practice discussions (participants sign up in advance)

- Topic-based professional learning and discussion, selected and led by members or invited presenters, typically centered on a shared between-meeting activity (e.g., reading a book chapter, reviewing an article, listening to a podcast).

A rotating CoP member facilitates each session, with members also volunteering to rotate through other support roles, such as note-taking, timekeeping, and agenda monitoring.

Sample CoP Agenda *(90 minutes total)*

Welcome and Grounding (10 minutes)

- Greet members and acknowledge new participants
- Revisit shared values and norms
- Brief celebrations

Problem of Practice Sharing (30 minutes)

- One member shares a current challenge or dilemma
- Group reflects, asks clarifying questions, and offers ideas or resources
- A volunteer records notes and next steps

Topic-Based Professional Learning & Discussion (40 minutes)

- Facilitated by a rotating CoP member or guest speaker
- Builds on a shared between-meeting activity (e.g., book chapter, article, podcast)
- May include discussion prompts, small group breakouts, or a mini workshop
- Members reflect on relevance to their current work

Reflection and Closing (10 minutes)

- Share key takeaways and actions
- Identify who will lead the next session or support tasks (e.g., note-taking, timekeeping)
- Confirm the next meeting date and the between-session activity

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Supporting BSP Facilitator Success

System Supports

Training and support for BSP facilitation should be available not only for BSP facilitators but also for individual practitioners, leadership, and Tier 3 systems teams. BSP facilitators should have clearly defined roles, access to experienced mentors and coaches, and system-level planning to ensure quality and coordination. Programs may also need access to outside expertise, such as district, community, or regional-level consultants, especially when supporting children and families with more complex support needs or experiences.

Essential Supports and Resources

To be successful, BSP facilitators need more than just skills. They also need the right structures, resources, and support in place, such as:

- Dedicated time and funding to meaningfully engage in the role, including planning, meetings, observations, coaching, and documentation

- Availability to offer coaching and support during actual routines when teams are implementing the BSP with children

- Access to materials and resources, such as IPBS manuals, process guides, and tools to create visual and communication supports

- Support from program leadership to prioritize the facilitator role, protect their time, and communicate its importance to staff and families

- Ongoing professional development and opportunities for reflection

- Clarity about role expectations, especially when facilitators are supporting multiple classrooms, sites, or teams

- Integration with other systems and roles, such as coaching, early childhood mental health consultation, or special education services

- Encouragement to partner with families, not only in planning but in continuously improving how the facilitator role works within the program

Funding Strategies

Funding for BSP facilitators is different across states, communities, and programs. It often requires creativity, alignment with existing roles, and strong leadership support. When funding is limited, programs and systems are encouraged to explore ways to integrate facilitation into their existing infrastructure rather than creating something entirely new. Examples of funding strategies include:

- Reallocation of existing staff roles, such as ECSE teachers, inclusion coaches, infant and early childhood mental health consultants, or instructional leaders who are already supporting behavior or teaming

- State-level Pyramid Model implementation efforts, including professional development networks or coaching systems

- IDEA Part B or Part C funds when supporting children with IEPs/IFSPs

- State-funded quality initiatives that support children in their least restrictive environment

- Blended or braided funding models, combining early childhood special education, mental health, and professional development funds

- Local program resources, including quality improvement funds, leadership team planning time, or contracted consultation services

Implementation Considerations

Thoughtful planning helps ensure BSP facilitation is accessible, timely, and embedded within a program's existing structures and supports. Programs and systems should establish clear criteria and collaborative processes for identifying when BSP facilitation is needed and how it will occur within the context of their Pyramid Model framework.

These criteria should emphasize strong implementation of universal and targeted practices to avoid over-reliance on individualized interventions when broader environmental supports may be more effective.

At the same time, programs should also incorporate flexible pathways to ensure that teams and families can access BSP facilitation quickly when urgent or immediate needs arise. Simple resources, such as decision-making guides, referral forms, or data-informed discussions, can help teams make consistent and timely decisions about when to initiate the process.

A thorough overview of the IPBS process is not the intended purpose of this guidance; however, this section provides several general considerations for implementing the IPBS process with BSP facilitation. Additional information about and resources to use during the steps of the IPBS process can be found in NCPMI's Resource Collection: Providing Intensive Individualized Intervention.

When to Initiate BSP Facilitation

Facilitation should begin when there is a clear need for individualized, intensive behavioral support. Indicators may include:

- The child's behavior is significantly impacting their engagement, learning, safety, or relationships

- Tier 2 supports have been implemented and found to be insufficient or not well-matched to the child's needs

- A team, including the family, is seeking additional support to better understand and respond to the child's behavior

- Data show that the child is at risk of exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspension, expulsion, shortened day, frequent removal from the environment), and initiating the IPBS process may help the team reflect, respond proactively, and implement effective intervention and support

- The child has a disability and requires individualized behavioral support as part of their right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) under the IDEA

Responding to Less Common or Complex Scenarios

Some programs have found it helpful to establish a process for addressing less frequent but potentially significant situations. These may include:

- When BSP facilitation is not leading to meaningful change, the team may benefit from consulting with additional specialists or providers

- When a medical concern is identified or emerges and should be addressed before continuing the BSP process

- When, through facilitation, it becomes clear that strengthening universal practices or targeted intervention (tier 2) may be sufficient for addressing the child's needs

- When the family expresses a need for additional support beyond what the BSP process offers, such as access to mental health services, housing assistance, or respite coordination

Having a straightforward, team-centered approach to navigate these moments can prevent delays, reduce frustration, and ensure that children and families continue to receive the kind of support they need.

Ensuring Quality through Continuous Learning and Improvement

Programs can strengthen BSP facilitation by intentionally learning from implementation. Strategies include:

- Gathering feedback from team members and families about the process

- Collecting facilitation data to understand access and patterns across children and settings

- Reviewing fidelity tools, coaching notes, and self-reflection checklists

- Supporting facilitators through peer learning, mentorship, and Communities of Practice

- Using data for system and practice improvement, and not for evaluating children or providers

These practices promote shared accountability and ongoing improvement, helping teams sustain high-quality, individualized positive behavior support over time.

Behavior Support Plan Facilitator Planning Questions for Pyramid Model Leaders

Use these questions to guide planning, reflection, and improvement across your program and system for Behavior Support Plan (BSP) facilitation:

Capacity & Role Clarity

- What expectations have we set for who can serve as a BSP facilitator and what the role includes?

- How are facilitators supported with dedicated time, mentorship, and opportunities to grow their skills?

- What does our professional learning pathway look like, and how does it help facilitators move from initial training to confident practice?

Process Fidelity & Adaptation

- How do we ensure our approach reflects the five steps of the IPBS process in ways that make sense for our program?

- What tools and resources do facilitators and teams use to guide and document the process?

- Where might we need to adapt materials or strategies while still maintaining the integrity of the process?

Family Partnership

- How are families involved throughout the BSP process, from the beginning to reflection and updates?

- What supports (e.g., interpreters, preferred formats, flexible scheduling) do we have in place to make participation easier for families?

- How do we make sure plans reflect what matters most to the child and family?

Access

- What patterns do we see in who is referred for BSPs, how quickly the BSP is initiated and completed to address urgent support needs, and how do we use that information to guide improvements?

- What are perceptions of barriers to access, and how can we address those barriers?

Sustainability & System Alignment

- How is BSP facilitation built into our existing teaming, coaching, or leadership structures?

- What kinds of data (e.g., coaching notes, family and team feedback, fidelity checklists, social validity, child outcomes) are we using to understand facilitator needs and to improve training and supports across roles and responsibilities?

- Where do BSP facilitators have opportunities to reflect together, build shared understanding, and stay connected over time?

Helpful Resources for BSP Facilitation

- Resource Collection on Providing Intensive Individualized Intervention
- Facilitating Individualized Interventions to Address Challenging Behavior
- Prevent Teach Reinforce for Young Children, second edition
- Prevent Teach Reinforce for Families
- Video: Functional Behavioral Assessments – Voices from the Field
- Tier 3 Student-Level Systems Guide
- Functional Behavior Assessment Brief Packet