

Handout 6: Challenging Behaviors⁶

Instructions

Your task is to identify some techniques for addressing challenging behaviors. The behaviors, described below, are not just found in families; they can be found in staff as well. First, go over the behaviors listed, add some examples of behaviors from your own work experiences, and share your reactions to the experiences. Next, brainstorm techniques for handling these behaviors when they surface in a staff-family meeting.

Personality

Melodramatic Mary

Behavior

Has a very dramatic style of interaction, all group discussions are very emotional events in her eyes, she sidetracks the discussion by asking questions about team members' feelings rather than by focusing on the purpose of the meeting. She brings focus on herself through this emphasis and ties the group up in talking about whether the process feels good.

Blaming Bob

Is usually a very outgoing person who focuses on problems in the life of the family. He seeks to define the causes, who is to blame, and then points to team members and blames them or the system for the problems. He creates, rather than resolves, conflicts throughout the process.

Minimizing Marsha

Minimizes the needs of the family, displays limited or no emotion or support for family members. As needs are identified, she always questions why they are important. She focuses on the ways the family reacted to the need in the past, rather than on what can be done in the future. She focuses on secondary issues whenever possible.

Silent Sandy

Doesn't participate in meeting discussions. May be silently hostile about what is going on and suggestions made by other team members. This person may actively sabotage team efforts as members move toward solutions.

Negative Nick

Responds to each suggestion by saying it won't work or it has been tried and didn't work. Won't let people who make suggestions finish sentences, and uses unrelated examples in illustrating why things won't work.

Talkative Ted

Dominates meetings by explaining everything in minute detail. Examples used by this individual frequently do not relate to the family or the purpose of the team meeting.

Mandate Mike

Tends to spend most of the meeting talking about rules and responsibilities of community systems set up to support families. Rules and responsibilities are usually discussed to point out pitfalls in the community service system that exclude the family's needs.

⁶Adapted with permission from E. Mary Grealish, *Virginia Wraparound Trainer Manual* (Community Partnership Group, 1994).