



2/27/17

Testimony of Melissa L. Olive, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Interim President of the Connecticut Association for Behavior Analysis (CT ABA)

Concerns regarding HB 7111

Committee on Children Public Hearing 2/28/17

Chairs Urban, Moore, and Suzio, and Members of the Committee on Children

The Connecticut Association for Behavior Analysis (CTABA) is a professional organization that seeks to assist in the development and advancement of the field of behavior analysis within the state of Connecticut through research, education, and dissemination of information. CTABA represents Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA) in Connecticut, with a current membership of over 400 persons certified by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board (BACB). CT ABA is an affiliated chapter of the Association of Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) and the Association of Professional Behavior Analysts (APBA). CTABA is honored to represent the field of applied behavior analysis (ABA) in Connecticut.

We are in support of the increased language further clarifying the definition of restraint in (3) (i.e., *including, but not limited to, carrying or forcibly moving an individual from one location to another.*) We would respectfully request that clarification be added to indicate that this does not include instructional prompts as part of an instructional plan. For example, it is common when teaching preschoolers with disabilities to use the toilet to physically guide the child to the toilet to avoid having accidents. Similarly, when transporting students with physical disabilities, it is common to pick them up and move them for positioning purposes. These types of prompts would be prescribed in a treatment plan with a distinct plan for fading the prompts as the students acquire independent skills.

We are in support of adding de-escalation procedures such as calming areas where students may elect to go in order to self-calm safely (see (7)). However, using the concept of de-escalation within the procedural description of time out is potentially problematic.

We would also be in support of a time-out procedure. However, we cannot support the procedure as defined in the bill. We have included the definition of timeout as an Appendix to this letter as well as additional information related to how a Time Out procedure could be used appropriately.

We are concerned that districts would be left on their own to create Time Out policies. As you can see from our Appendix, Time Out is a complicated procedure that requires extensive training to implement

as well as continuous oversight during its use to ensure that the procedure is having the desired effect on challenging behavior. The oversight would also be necessary to ensure the procedure is eventually terminated and no longer part of the treatment plan.

Our final concern relates to the proposed requirement to have a crisis intervention team immediately report to the scene of a restraint or seclusion. First, we are concerned for the student's dignity when a team of people are watching the student be restrained or secluded. Second, if the child is engaging in the behavior in order to obtain attention, the presence of all the observers would serve to increase the behavior. Finally, what happens if a school has more than one student in crisis in two different locations? Some schools have multiple children with behavioral challenges. It is in those schools that teams will be challenged to implement this requirement.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Melissa L. Olive, Ph.D., BCBA-D

CTABA Interim President

On behalf of the CTABA Executive Council, Incoming Board of Directors, & Legislative Committee

Appendix A: Time Out

Definition of Time Out

“The withdrawal of the opportunity to earn positive reinforcement, or the loss of access to positive reinforcers for a specified period of time, contingent on the occurrence of a behavior.” (Cooper, Heron, and Heward, 2007).

By definition, time out is a punishment procedure. If used correctly, it will result in a decrease in the targeted challenging behavior. However, if used incorrectly, it could result in an increase in targeted challenging behavior.

Types of Time Out

Exclusionary Time Out

Exclusionary time out occurs when the student is removed from the instructional/reinforcing environment for a pre-determined period of time. For example, the student could be placed in a time out room, he/she could be made to stand in the hall, or he/she could be placed at the back of the room behind a partition or similar.

Non-Exclusionary Time Out

Non-exclusionary time out occurs when the student remains within the instructional/reinforcing environment. However, the student is unable to obtain reinforcers for a pre-determined period of time. This procedure may be implemented in several ways. For example, time out ribbons may be used to signal staff that reinforcers are not available to the student (Foxy & Shapiro, 1978). If the class is earning tickets for reinforcers, the student with no time out ribbon would not receive a ticket.

The teacher could also use time out by placing a toy or object in time out. For example, the student could be in time out from computer time for a set period of time. A parent could remove access to a cell phone for a period of time.

Finally, the teacher could require the student to observe his/her peers during reinforcing activities (e.g., recess or game time; Harris, 1985).

Time Out Procedures

1. Assessment drives intervention

Before Time Out is used for a student, the educational team should first understand why the child’s behavior is occurring. This is accomplished by completing a functional behavior assessment (FBA). Once the FBA is completed a behavior intervention plan (BIP) should be developed.

2. Reinforcement -based and least-intrusive intervention plan

The Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) should include a plan to prevent targeted challenging behavior, teach appropriate replacement behavior, and a plan for increased reinforcement. Punishment procedures, such as Time Out, should not be used unless the team has attempted reinforcement-based procedures first. In the event that Time Out is included in a BIP, it should be combined with a reinforcement plan as well as a plan to teach a replacement behavior. Time Out should not be used unless a comprehensive plan has been developed.

3. Identify the length of time out

Before, implementing the Time Out procedure, the plan should include a designated length of time for the Time Out. The length of time out will be determined based on the age and skill set of the student. Brief Time Out (e.g., 1 to 5 minutes), may be as effective as a longer Time Out in reducing problem behavior (Donaldson & Vollmer, 2011; Gast & Nelson, 2001).

4. Criteria for ending time out

The plan should include criteria for ending the Time Out procedure as well as a detailed plan for fading the Time Out procedure.

5. Data collection

The behavior intervention plan should include procedures for collecting data and monitoring the progress of the behavior intervention plan.

References

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