

## **Lesson Plan**

**Objective:** To teach persons with severe disabilities to use communicative labels to **make choices**.

### **Settings and materials**

Community based sites such as community library, recreation center, a local golf course and a day care treatment center. The materials in these settings were utilized such as magazines both in the library and the day care center, exercise equipment in the recreation center, putting at the golf course and attending meetings with other adults at the day care center.

### **Content taught**

#### ***Phase One: Assess Activity Preference***

1. Select responses that will be utilized to assess preference, e.g., activity level, manipulation of objects, affect duration of participation, refusal.
2. Use current and past data to detect preferences, e.g., data from person centered plans, activity and setting sampling.
3. Honor preferences, but continue to introduce novelty and assess preferences.

#### ***Phase Two: Teach Communicative Labels for known Preferences***

1. Identify objects, pictures, or other symbols to represent activities and settings.
2. Show participant an array with target symbol and irrelevant distracters.
3. Use systematic prompt fading to teach correct object selection (e.g., time delay).
4. Provide access to activity or setting immediately after selection of correct symbol.

#### ***Phase Three: Give Opportunities to Use Labels to Request Activities***

1. Provide an array of trained symbols for available activities or settings.
2. Provide access to activity or setting chosen.
3. If no choice, retrain phase two.

Continue with this three-fold assessment process to increase options and honor changes in preferences across time.

### **Teaching procedure**

#### ***Phase One: Observations of Preference***

- Preferred activities were chosen for each participant by reviewing a list of 30 activities that had been developed through person centered planning and that participants had sampled in both the community and day center. As a part of the program's ongoing services to identify preferences, staff had taken notes on whether participants engaged in, or refused, these activities. Two evaluators independently reviewed these notes and agreed 100%.
- From the lists, two preferred activities were chosen for each participant that could be offered on a regular basis. Given that the participants had shown a preference for these activities, data were collected to determine if there were differences between the two settings in duration of participation.

- Participants were given opportunities to experience the two activities in each of the two settings on a counterbalanced schedule. One of the staff escorted the participant to the setting, helped the person to select the necessary materials, helped the person find their seat, exercise mat or golf hole and then observed several feet away without further prompting.
- The participation was timed; it started when activity began and ended when person terminated activity by saying “no,” engaging in distressed behavior, or walking away. Timing was conducted up to fifteen minutes because of natural breaks in the activities that occurred after a point.

### ***Phase Two: Instruction in Using Objects to Label Settings***

- Objects were chosen as the communicative label for each setting because these participants could not discriminate between pictures or use manual signs and had not acquired new verbalizations in past instruction. These objects were ones that were either used or found in the context of the setting.
- An errorless teaching procedure that incorporated time delay was used to teach object selection. For each participant’s first session, the instructor prompted correct object selection using a gesture and physical prompt together at 0 seconds delay. The instructor then praised the participant for selecting the item and escorted him/her to the activity.
- During the second session, the gesture prompt was given at 0 seconds delay and physical guidance was given at 5 seconds delay. If the person started to select the wrong object, the instructor said, “ No, you need this one” and physically guided the correct selection. Once the person had the correct object in hand, the instructor praised him/her and they went to corresponding setting.
- In the third and subsequent sessions, the gesture and physical guidance were both given at 5 seconds delay and five repeated trials were implemented to encourage correct anticipations.

### ***Phase Three: Assessment of Setting Choice Using New Object Labels***

- To assess choice making, a forced-choice stimulus preference assessment was used. The two objects that represented the two alternative settings (e.g., day care versus the community recreation center) were displayed together. The location of the two objects (left versus right) was randomized across sessions.
- The staff person asked, “ Where do you want to go?” and waited 30 seconds for the participants to pick up an object. When the participant picked up an object, the staff person escorted him/her to the setting to participate in the activity.
- The assessment was conducted on the days that the community center was available immediately prior to the activity, but the staff person honored the participant’s choice to go to the activity in the community or to stay in the day care center. In case the participant made a mistake, correction was prompted.

### **Method of evaluation**

The dependent variable was the cumulative number of correct selections of the object that represented the scheduled setting. These selections were made prior to going to the activity in the center’s activity room or the community.

- In phase two, during baseline and ongoing probes, the instructor presented the participant with an array that included the object that represented the setting and two distracters not associated with any of the activities. The instructor then asked the person to select the object needed for

the setting. The instructor waited for 5 seconds for the participant to select the correct object and then scored the trial as correct (picked up the object) or incorrect (no response or picked up the wrong object). During baseline, the participant was then escorted to the setting regardless of the response. Prior to leaving, the instructor gave the person the correct object if it had not been selected and collected any incorrect objects but no verbal feedback was given about the selection.

- Once intervention began, the probe trial was followed by teaching trials to select the correct object prior to going to the setting. During baseline, the participants went to the scheduled activity in the designated settings regardless of their response to the object selection probe. Once intervention began, the participant was prompted to select the correct object prior to being escorted to the setting.
- In the third phase, the participants were observed in their use of objects to select settings. Participants had one opportunity to make a choice during each session and their cumulative choices per session were summarized for each type of setting (day program versus community site).

**Lesson plan based on:** Browder, D. M., Cooper, K. J., & Lim, L. (1998). Teaching adults with severe disabilities to express their choice of settings for leisure activities. Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 33, 228-238.