



Umbrella Summary

Behavior Modeling Training

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

What is behavior modeling training?

Behavior modeling training (BMT) involves the following five steps: “(a) describing to trainees a set of well-defined behaviors (skills) to be learned, (b) providing a model or models displaying the effective use of those behaviors, (c) providing opportunities for trainees to practice using those behaviors, (d) providing feedback and social reinforcement to trainees following practice, and (e) taking steps to maximize the transfer of those behaviors to the job” (Taylor et al., 2005, p. 692). BMT can be used to train a variety of skills, from interpersonal skills like conflict management, interviewing, assertive communication, and cross-cultural management, to technical skills like using computer software or operating equipment.

Why is BMT valuable?

BMT is valuable because it has positive effects on various learning outcomes, including attitudes (e.g., self-efficacy), knowledge, skills, and job behavior (Taylor et al., 2005). The impact on knowledge and skills is large, whereas the effects on attitudes and job behavior are modest (Taylor et al., 2005). More specifically, there are certain approaches that make BMT more or less effective. Below are the conclusions and recommendations that can be offered (Taylor et al., 2005).

- ▷ Type of main learning points: BMT is particularly effective when the key learning points are presented as rules underlying the model’s behavior. For example, for supervisory coaching behaviors, rules include things like focusing on the problem, asking for solutions, listening openly, and setting a follow-up date (Hogan et al., 1986). Rules are more valuable than specific instructions about exactly what to say or do, which may only be suitable in certain situations (e.g., Decker, 1980).
- ▷ Timing of main learning points: Learning suffers if the learning points are shared concurrently with the modeled behavior, so it is better to present them before or after the modeling.
- ▷ Type of model: For skills that need to be used in and adapted to a variety of situations (e.g., interpersonal skills), it is best to show more than one model and to show both desired behaviors and undesirable or incorrect behaviors. Though this can make knowledge acquisition more challenging (e.g., harder to learn the rules), it leads to improved transfer of learning to on-the-job behavior. Note, however, that if there is only one correct way to do something (i.e., where exact replication is needed), such as

in some types of technical training, then only the exact desired behavior should be modeled.

- ▷ Preparation for practice: Skill improvements are greater when trainees prepare for their practice demonstration by visualizing themselves performing the behavior.
- ▷ Type of practice scenarios: When learners are familiar with the job and the situations that might arise, training transfer is improved when trainees generate the practice scenarios than when trainers develop them.
- ▷ Transfer planning: When learners are instructed to develop specific goals around on-the-job behavior, transfer is improved.
- ▷ Behavior consequences: When learners are reinforced or sanctioned for employing or not employing the skills learned in training (such as through performance appraisal), transfer is improved.
- ▷ Supervisor involvement: When learners' supervisors also receive the training, transfer is improved.

QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ BMT has large, positive effects on knowledge acquisition and skill development.
- ▶ BMT has modest effects on attitudes and job behaviors.
- ▶ A number of factors make BMT more or less effective, including how and when key learning points are communicated, types of behaviors modeled, how learners prepare for practice, types of practice scenarios, whether trainees set goals to apply what they learned and are reinforced for doing so, and whether learners' supervisors are also trained.

References

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Author(s)

Megan Paul, PhD, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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