Personnel Supervision and Management

Behavior analyst certification examination

7 tasks · 19 questions on the exam · BACB Test Content Outline (6th ed.)

This area covers supervising and managing the people who deliver behavior-analytic services: why behavior-analytic supervision matters, building the supervisory relationship, equity, choosing supervision goals, performance management procedures, function-based assessment of staff performance, and evaluating supervision with data. Questions describe a supervisee or staff problem and ask what the supervisor should do; the best answers assess the cause, use behavioral skills training and feedback, and measure both supervisee performance and client outcomes.

You should be able to: Given a supervision or staff performance problem, you should be able to name the benefits of behavior-analytic supervision, set up a clear and equitable supervisory relationship, choose goals and procedures from an assessment of the cause, and evaluate supervision with performance and client outcome data.

Every task: the key point and the trap

I.1 Identify the benefits of using behavior-analytic supervision (e.g., improved client outcomes, improved staff performance and retention).

Behavior-analytic supervision applies the science to the behavior of supervisees and staff: clear expectations, direct observation, data, feedback and reinforcement.

Trap: Supervision is not only a certification requirement; its main purpose is improved client outcomes through improved staff performance.

I.2 Identify and apply strategies for establishing effective supervisory relationships (e.g., executing supervisor-supervisee contracts, establishing clear expectations, giving and accepting feedback).

Start with a written supervisor-supervisee contract that states the responsibilities of each party, the schedule and format of supervision, the content and competencies to be covered, the evaluation methods, how feedback will be given, and the conditions for ending the relationship.

Trap: A supervisory relationship relies on clear, written expectations at the outset; expecting supervisees to infer expectations sets them up to fail.

I.3 Identify and implement methods that promote equity in supervision practices.

Equity in supervision means every supervisee has fair access to opportunities, resources, feedback and evaluation, adjusted to individual needs so that outcomes are not determined by background or identity.

Trap: Treating every supervisee identically is not always equitable; equity may require adjustments so all supervisees have a fair chance to succeed.

I.4 Select supervision goals based on an assessment of the supervisee's skills, cultural variables, and the environment.

Supervision goals are selected from an assessment of the supervisee's current skills, using direct observation, competency checklists, work samples and self-assessment.

Trap: Supervision goals should come from an assessment of the supervisee's skills and setting, not from a generic list applied to everyone.

I.5 Identify and apply empirically validated and culturally responsive performance management procedures (e.g., modeling, practice, feedback, reinforcement, task clarification, manipulation of response effort).

Behavioral skills training (BST) is the standard for teaching skills to staff: instructions, modeling, rehearsal and feedback, repeated until the skill meets a criterion, ideally in the work setting.

Trap: Training alone does not solve every performance problem; if the person can perform the skill, consequences, effort or antecedents may need to change instead.

I.6 Apply a function-based approach (e.g., performance diagnostics) to assess and improve supervisee behavior.

A function-based approach to staff performance asks why a performance problem occurs before choosing an intervention, as an FBA does for client behavior.

Trap: Retraining staff who already have the skill does not fix a performance problem caused by missing resources or consequences; diagnose the cause first.

I.7 Make data-based decisions about the efficacy of supervisory practices.

Supervisors evaluate the effects of their supervision and training with data, not impressions.

Trap: Satisfaction with supervision is not evidence that it works; efficacy is judged by supervisee performance and client outcomes.

Key terms

Behavioral skills training: Instructions, modeling, rehearsal and feedback used to teach skills to criterion.

Supervision contract: A written agreement stating the responsibilities, schedule, content, evaluation and termination of supervision.

Performance feedback: Information given to a person about their performance to improve it.

Task clarification: Specifying the tasks of a job clearly, often with checklists.

Performance diagnostics: Assessment of the variables responsible for a staff performance problem.

Skill deficit: The person cannot perform the task, even with motivation.

Performance deficit: The person can perform the task but does not under current conditions.

Response effort: The physical or cognitive effort a response requires, which affects its likelihood.

Equity: Fair access to opportunities and support, adjusted to individual needs.

Turnover: Staff leaving an organization, affected by the quality of supervision and training.

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