



## Behavioral Rehearsals

### Definition

Behavioral rehearsals are opportunities to practice skills using realistic scenarios while in a safe and supportive environment. They differ from “role plays” in that the focus is on rehearsal of skills rather than on emotional enactment or being “in role.” The term “role play” may suggest that participants are expected to create emotional performances that are uncomfortably revealing. Using a real or constructed case scenario, Continuum staff practice their skills with colleagues who take the place of a youth, family member(s), and/or stakeholder(s). Behavioral rehearsals can be organized as dyads, dyads with an observer, or a fishbowl (a dyad practicing in front of a group). Some should be organized to allow one Continuum staff (either clinician or outreach) to practice their skills, while others could allow staff to practice as a team.

Supervisors facilitate structured group learning sessions using behavioral rehearsals to help staff develop knowledge and skills that can be transferred from practice settings to actual family settings. These sessions are meant to bring together staff within a unit or program site to aid staff in their professional development. These sessions are not a forum where clinical decisions are made regarding how to provide care to a child or family.

### Purpose

Behavioral rehearsal allows supervisors to:

- Bring staff together in a group venue to share experiences and expertise.
- Build a collaborative work environment.
- Share best practices among staff.

### Outcomes

Consistent and meaningful behavioral rehearsal should lead to:

- Increased staff confidence
- Decreased staff performance anxiety
- Increased practice consistency across staff

### Frequency

Supervisors should convene behavioral rehearsal learning sessions regularly. Once each month is recommended to ensure that participants become skilled, efficient and comfortable in using behavioral rehearsal. Behavioral rehearsal could be used in regularly occurring training and group supervision meetings rather than a special event.

## Preparation

Supervisors work with their staff to develop a scenario or select a clinical situation to use as the basis for the behavioral rehearsal. The selection could be informed by staff self-assessments and /or field observations. Scenarios may be easy or challenging, and call for behavioral responses ranging from relatively brief, scripted responses to longer sequences of interaction in which participants can engage in considerable improvisation. It is probably best to start with easy scenarios and move to more challenging scenarios. For example, a scenario could focus on orienting family to services, from the Engaging Youth & Families core element. Over time, the scenarios used should become more complex, describing a family situation that requires practice across multiple core elements.

## Conducting a behavioral rehearsal

- Practice case scenarios are provided to the participants.
- Set a time for conducting the rehearsal and keep to it. 10 to 15 minutes allows for meaningful practice. Don't let the rehearsal drift into a conversation about the scenario; stay in the scenario.
- Assign a time-keeper.
- During the rehearsal, observers watch and listen attentively and make notes on the observation tool. They do not comment on, coach, or otherwise participate in the rehearsals.

## Debriefing a behavioral rehearsal

- Begin by asking rehearsing clinician or outreach worker to reflect on their practice. It is important that person who will be receiving feedback reflects on their experience first. Ask thought-provoking and reflective questions, such as:
  - What did you notice about the experience? How did it feel to you?
  - What did you like about what you did?
  - If you could have a do over, what might you do differently?
  - How will you use this going forward?
- Next, ask the person on the receiving end of the practice to provide their feedback. They won't have written notes, so their feedback will be more impressionistic than that of the observers. Ask them to reflect on:
  - What did you notice about the experience?
  - What did you like about what the practitioner did?
  - Is there something you would suggest they do differently?

- After the participants in the behavioral rehearsal reflect on their experience, ask the observer(s) to provide feedback based on their notes.

## Providing Feedback

The goal of providing feedback is to help the clinician / outreach worker continue to build their Continuum knowledge and skills. The tone, style, and content of your feedback are all key elements to ensuring that it is productive. The observer's stance should be one of interest and curiosity, not one of being an expert.

- Affirming, direct, and realistic

State what you believe was done well, and say what you mean in plain language. Direct your comments towards areas of focus that are actionable. Keep your comments within the scope of what the person actually can do.

- Non-judgmental

Offer your own professional perspective. Focus on insights aimed at helping your colleague improve their knowledge, skill, and ability. Avoid providing evaluative feedback that focuses on rating or ranking their practice, e.g., "I'd give you 4 on that."

- Specific

Base your comments on concrete, observable behavior. Provide particulars so that the person has enough information to pinpoint the areas you are referencing. Give examples as needed to clarify your observations. "You have a nice rapport with the family" doesn't indicate what specific behavior was observed to suggest the rapport is nice.

- Timely

Time your comments appropriately. To be effective, feedback must be well-timed. Assess if the person is in a place both physically and emotionally where they can receive feedback.

- Individualized

Treat each person's work independently and avoid comparisons. Don't say "You did that so much better than so-and-so." Provide opportunities for the person to ask for clarification to fully understand the feedback.

## Receiving Feedback

It is important to be prepared to receive feedback. Focus on both the person giving the feedback and on the information provided.

- Clarify what kind of feedback will be most helpful. The feedback from others is for your benefit, and specifying your needs will result in more specific and actionable steps.
- Concentrate fully on what is being said. Focus on what the person wants you to know, not on what you would like to hear. Take notes on the feedback for reference later when you consider adjustments to your practice.
- Notice your reactions while the feedback is presented. Push through any adverse thoughts and feelings and continue to take in the specifics of what is being provided. Remain open to perspectives that differ from your own.