

# Using Functional Communication Training to Replace Challenging Behavior

## HANDOUT

11



### **Defining Functional Communication Training (FCT)**

- ✓ FCT is based on an understanding of the purpose of the challenging behavior.
- ✓ FCT teaches socially appropriate behaviors that children can use in place of challenging behavior.
- ✓ FCT strengthens a child's communication skills and at the same time reduces his or her challenging behavior.



### **Selecting the Replacement Behavior**

- ✓ Once the function or purpose of the child's behavior is determined (see *What Works Brief #9*), a new communication skill that serves the same purpose as the challenging behavior is selected. This new skill is called the replacement behavior.
- ✓ The replacement behavior, or new form of communication, should be something that (1) the child is already capable of using, (2) can be taught very easily, (3) will be easily noticed and responded to positively whenever the child uses it, and (4) works quickly for the child.
- ✓ The replacement behavior can involve speech, gestures, signs, or pictures, as long as the strategy is something readily available and appropriate to the child's developmental level and is realistic to implement.



### **Implementing Functional Communication Training**

- ✓ Once the new communication form is selected, the intervention involves ignoring the old (challenging) behavior and prompting and acknowledging the use of the newly selected replacement behavior.
- ✓ The newly taught replacement behavior should be as effective or more effective than the challenging behavior in terms of the child getting what the child wants.
- ✓ FCT provides more opportunities for the child to be acknowledged for socially appropriate behavior than for challenging behavior.
- ✓ FCT is most effective when the child is given access to persons, objects, or activities that he or she prefers as a result of using his or her new communication skills. When the child is given desired and meaningful feedback, he or she is more likely to learn and perform the socially appropriate replacement behavior.

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