

Module VII. Developing Transitional Living Plans

Skills Assessments

(see Appendix I. for an example of a skills assessment)

Tips for Completing Skills Assessments

- Be prompt
- Make the person as comfortable as possible.
- Explain everything you are going to do and the reason for doing it.
- Take your time, do not rush—this is your time to get to know the person.
- You must complete the entire assessment—this is the information that you will use to develop the individual’s goals.
- If the person does not have or does not know the answer, you may have to go back to the questions later.
- Use whatever resources and resource people are available. The person with the brain injury should always be the first choice for gathering information, but there are times when family members or others may be needed to get the information. Make sure you have the person’s written permission to speak to others on their behalf.
- Be prepared. There may be tools you will need to help yourself in determining whether an individual can complete some tasks.
- Process may take a few days or a whole week. Be thorough.
- Some individuals with brain injuries can be challenging. Be patient.

Assessor Interviewing Techniques

As an assessor you will be assisting individuals to function in the least restrictive setting of the person’s choice. To achieve this goal, it is imperative that you obtain accurate information with which to make decisions about his/her goals.

Performing an accurate assessment requires that you communicate effectively with the person who has a brain injury and other individuals in their support network. Some individual’s will stray from the topic. Gently guide the conversation back to the topic. For example, you might say, “Let’s go back to…” or “Tell me about…” and continue with the interview process.

When you receive conflicting information, clarify the issue determining skill level.

The following are some general guidelines to use when interviewing an individual with a brain injury:

- Observe the person during the interview. This will assist you in answering questions found in the TL Skills Assessment.

- Some items will require special sensitivity on your part during the assessment process. This is especially true on the item related to cognition (memory-recall) and continence.
- Maintain a positive attitude. The assessment process is more than a task. It is an opportunity to assist the persons to accurately assess their skills.
- Some individuals will be eager to talk, but will not stay on the topic. Gently guide the discussion back to the topic.
- You might use one of the following phrases: “What do you mean?” “Tell me what you have in mind.” “Tell me more about...” and “Please be more specific,” “Give me an example...”
- When you are not certain what has been said, ask for clarification. Be careful not to appear to challenge the individual. Good examples of clarifying statements would be “I think I hear you saying that....” or “Let’s see if I understood you correctly, You said...., Is that right?”

The following are some general guidelines to use when interviewing a person who may have cognitive or behavioral issues:

- Use individuals’ last name and title (Mr., Mrs., Miss, Dr., Rev., etc.) when initiating the interview.
- If the person has eye glasses or a hearing aid, be sure that they have them on. Verify that the hearing aid is working.
- Be sure the area where you are conducting the interview has adequate light. Ensure that a light is not directly shining into the eyes of the individual
- Minimize interruptions or distractions during the interview. If a radio or television is on, ask the person’s permission to lower the volume or turn off the set.
- Try to sit with the person across from you. Maintain eye contact if culturally acceptable and/or it does not make the person uncomfortable. Be sure there is not activity behind you. This could distract the person.
- Say the person’s name before you ask each question or set of questions. You also may want to ask the person if they are ready for the next question.
- Provide the person with ample time to answer the question. Many people with brain injury need to take more time to process information. By waiting quietly for an answer you may be able to obtain more accurate information. Remember to give the person time to think.
- Repeat a question or item that you think has been misunderstood or misinterpreted.
- Pause or hesitate to indicate you are listening and need more or better information. This is a good technique to use while you are determining the person’s response pattern.

The Development of Goals

(see Appendix I. for examples of written goals)

Goals are used as the basis for the Transitional Living Services the person will receive. Goals are determined by the individual with assistance from their Case Manager and/or TLS Specialist. The staff person aides the person by discussing what potential goals may be helpful to increase the person’s independence (i.e., re-learning to balance their checkbook or cook a meal safely). The staff member also aides the person by explaining the steps (or objectives) the person would need to take in order to achieve their desired goals.

What are Goals?

A goal is a clear statement of a person's desired result or outcome. To reach a goal, the Transitional Living Skills (TLS) Specialist assists the person in developing the necessary objectives the person needs to work on to reach their goal. An objective is developed by breaking down the goal into manageable steps. There are generally several objectives for each particular goal.

Writing Outcome-Based, Measurable Goals

When a person has determined the goal(s) they wish to work toward, the TLS Specialist then helps them identify the steps (or objectives) they would need to take to achieve their goal. For example, if the person's goal is to manage their household finances, then objectives may include such things as paying bills with assistance from the TLS Specialist twice a month for three months and developing a chart or calendar to remind the individual when regular bills are due. As the person becomes more able to perform the tasks on their own, the TLS Specialist then "fades" from their involvement in teaching the objective. An example of this would be that the TLS Specialist reviews the person's bill payment schedule each month for three more months to ensure the objective is being worked on (i.e., they are paying their bills in a timely fashion), without the TLS Specialist providing hands-on assistance.

Objectives should include these components:

- What
- When
- Where
- How

Objectives should:

- show action
- be observable
- be measurable (frequency, accuracy, & duration)
- have a short time frame for completion

The measurement of goals

Goals that are developed should be measurable. This means the TLS Specialist can observe the necessary objectives by recording the frequency that the objective is attempted, the accuracy of the person when completing the objective, & the time (or duration) it takes to complete the objective.

Task Analysis

(see Appendix I. for examples of a task analyses)

A task analysis is a step-by-step breakdown of any task. The number of steps varies depending on the complexity of the task. The task analysis should include all of the information needed for training to occur in a consistent manner. This is especially important if more than one TLS Specialist is involved in teaching the person the necessary steps.

A task analysis should include:

- A goal statement

- The objective the person is working on to achieve the goal
- The training techniques to be used
- The teachable steps necessary to complete the task
- The criterion used to determine that the person has met the objective

The task analysis system consists of seven phases:

1. Method- the way the task is done.
2. Content- steps into which task is divided (breaking it down into teachable components). “Teachable” is a decision that is made by the person doing the task analysis. This person must find ways to eliminate variability or reduce the tasks to simple, more understandable units.
3. Process- designing strategies for teaching the content
 - A) Format- the presentation of content or the way in which a task is taught (such as through forward chaining, backward chaining, or total task presentation).
 - B) Feedback- letting the person know what is wanted of them and if they are achieving it. This information can come before, during, or after a behavior occurs.

Reinforcement feedback that provides a person with information about what they have done, but in addition, it serves as motivation.
 - C) Criterion- a decision related to how you know that the learner knows what you want them to know. This can be an arbitrary predetermined point in which it can be observed that learning has taken place. This is generally seen through a repeated demonstration of the behavior/task under the circumstances where it would be expected to occur.
4. Train- if learning is not occurring, proceed to phases 5, 6, then 7
5. Re-do process- The TLS Specialist should ask themselves, “Is there a format I can use that I haven’t used that might help the person learn?”
6. Re-do content- The TLS Specialist should ask themselves, “How can I subdivide a step a person is having difficulty with into teachable components?”
7. Re-do method- The TLS Specialist should ask themselves, “Is there a completely different way of doing this task than the way we’ve been doing it?”

Using Task Analysis with People that have Head Injuries

For an individual who finds it more difficult to learn a certain task, the TLS Specialist should break the task down into more steps. Alternative methods for teaching a task are a function of the creativity and experience of the person compiling the task analysis. If learning is not occurring, something needs to be changed. It is not the fault of the person if they are not learning; the problem lies in the way they are being taught.

Teaching Strategies

Definitions/Terms

Fading- the TLS Specialist should give information as the person makes mistakes. They should give less information each time a task is attempted, but enough to solve the problem each time.

Simultaneous Presentation- showing the person everything at once.

Successive Presentation- the person sees the item they're supposed to have, then it's put aside and they look for others one at a time, making a yes/no decision.

Recognition- recognizing information that is presented.

Recall- remembering information without anything being presented.

Forward Chaining- teach the first part of a task until the person knows it, then teach the second part of the task.

Backward Chaining- teach the last part of a step, then the second to the last, etc.

Clustering- some parts of a task hang together and need to be taught together.

Total Task Presentation- the person goes through or is put through the entire task each time.

Organized Exposure with Feedback- the TLS Specialist creates an immediate, artificial environment where the criterion of the performance of a task is obtained from the start. Then, fade from the artificial environment gradually, and back to the original one. This is used for multiple pieces of learning that are not sequenced such as work behavior, social interaction skills, etc.

Stimulus Control- the major focus of attention is placed on organizing the environment to provide information.

Reinforcement Control- focusing attention on contingencies, on cause and effect relationship—what happens after a person does something.

Modeling- provides information that doesn't have much power.

Rule of Self Correction- the person is operating on internal feedback. They recognize an error has been made and they correct it. This is the last stage before correctly doing a task.

- A) Allow self correction only when you think more will be learned from making the error than from the TLS Specialist catching it in progress.
- B) When you don't feel that self correction is going to be helpful, try to provide feedback after the decision is made, but before it has been acted upon.
- C) When teaching a complex manual skill, manually direct the person the entire task several times to provide a basis of experience for responding to later corrections.

Rule of Non-Interference- When you have someone attending where you want the person to attend, find a way of providing feedback that does not require them to stop attending.

Rule of Inconspicuous Feedback- When you must interfere with a behavior that you believe is meant to be attention-getting, interfere in a way that appears to be unintentional.

Rule of Diminishing Feedback-

- A) Each time you correct an error that has been made before, provide enough information to correct the error, but less information than the last time.
- B) Each time you change the feedback, the strength of the feedback reduces.
- C) If you have a prompt that works, don't use it again.

Reinforcements-

- A) Natural- those that are found where you ultimately expect the behavior to occur.
- B) Artificial- reinforcers you don't expect to exist where the behavior will occur (the more you add, the more you will have to eventually take out).
- C) "No news is good news"- when the task provides its own motivation, you don't have to.

Prompting

Types of Prompts

- *Verbal*- Can be direct or indirect.
 - Examples: The next step is to put your shoes on. (direct)
 - What's missing from your feet? (Indirect)
- *Visual*- gestures, pictures, demonstrations, modeling, proximity. Make sure gestural prompts do not convey the correct response only that a response is required.
 - Example: The desired response is signing a name to a check. The cue is pointing to the line where the person needs to sign the check. When a cue is faded, the person may no longer know where to sign.
- *Physical*- directed and careful physical guidance NOT forced responding. Fade by providing less and less contact.
- *Within Stimulus*- can be very effective, but can be difficult to create. Exaggerate the critical part of the stimulus (proximity, size, color, etc.).
 - Example: The person's goal is to take food only from their own plate. The TLS Specialist would sit at more than an arm's length from the person (proximity is exaggerated). Reinforcement is done when the person does not take food from the TLS Specialist's plate at this distance. The TLS Specialist would then continue to move closer and reinforce the desired behavior.

Prompt Fading

- Always have a plan for fading.
- Make sure all staff know when each level of a prompt is faded.
- Independence can only occur when the staff person involved has been completely faded out of the situation, unless the staff member has a specific reason for being a part of it. This is a reason to use non-person specific prompts.
- Fade to the most natural cue.
- Monitor progress, preferably with some type of on-going data

- Individualize- you don't have to go through a whole prompt hierarchy, but you may need to fade to a different kind of prompt rather than just a different intensity of the current prompt.
- Do occasional checks to see how independent the person has become by quickly fading or withholding a prompt. Keep a record of these and compare them to the original task analysis.

Using Instructional Prompts

Prompt

- Assistance provided to the person after the presentation of the instructional stimulus, but BEFORE the person's response.
- Provided immediately following the stimulus or natural cue and before a learner error can occur.

Correction

- Assistance provided AFTER an incorrect response or delay in responding.
- All prompts must be purposeful (not accidental), consistent, and systematic. All staff need to use the same prompts. If prompting is inconsistent, learning could be slowed and the person could become very frustrated and confused.
- One of the reasons to use prompting rather than correction is that it is very easy for people to become "hooked" on correction. When this happens, an incorrect response become part of the learned task. Watch for this when teaching a skill and be cautious when reinforcing a correct response that has been achieved through correction.
- Begin with a task analysis so the person is not prompted on what they already know and are not over-prompted on what they almost know. *Every prompt you put in place will have to be faded.*
- Begin with the least intrusive type of prompt. This may not necessarily be a verbal one.
- Choose prompts based upon the person's learning style. Observe how they learn things and if it is possible, ask them how they figure tasks or problems out. This will help you to choose the right prompt.
- Be aware of how prompts will appear to others- friends, family, and the community. Be as subtle as possible.
- If progress is not being made, or the person is getting frustrated or angry, be sure the person understands what you are asking them to do. Also, if the person has problems with immediate memory, make sure they are remembering the prompt.