Functional Assessment and Intervention Design

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1. Observe and operationally define the target behavior.

   a. What does the animal do that can be observed and measured?

2. Identify the distant and immediate physical and environmental antecedents that predict the behavior.

   a. What distant or general conditions or events affect whether the problem behavior occurs?

      i. Species, sex, age?

      ii. Medical or physical problems?

      iii. Eating routines and diet?

      iv. Daily schedule?

      v. Enclosure and activity space?

   b. What are the immediate antecedents that predict or set the occasion for the problem behavior?

      i. When, where and with whom is the behavior problem most likely to occur?

      ii. Does the behavior immediately follow a caregiver's demand or request, or a person entering or leaving the environment?

   c. When is the animal most successful, that is, under what circumstances doesn't the problem occur?

3. Identify the consequences that maintain the problem behavior, i.e., the immediate purpose the behavior serves for the animal.

   a. What does the animal gain by behaving in this way, such as attention, an item or activity, or sensory feedback?

   b. What does the animal avoid by behaving in this way, such as particular people, a demand or requests, items or activities, or sensory stimulation?

   c. To what extent does this species' wild environment support the behavior (i.e., what function might it serve from a natural history perspective)?

4. Develop a summary statement that describes the relationships among the distant antecedents, immediate antecedent, the observable behavior, and the consequence for each major situation in which the behavior occurs, as in Figure 1.

Distant Antecedents: This parrot was re-homed after spending its first 6 months loose in a dark basement with 9 others parrots. It was malnourished and under-socialized.

Antecedent: When I walk out of the room
Behavior: the parrot screams loudly and repetitively
Consequence: to get me to come to his cage.

Figure 1 Functional Assessment Summary Statement

After the functional assessment summary statements have been developed, the primary caregiver can answer the following questions, in order to plan the behavior-change program.

5. Replacement behavior: What existing alternative behavior would meet the same purpose for the animal?

   a. Rather than _____

      (Identify the problem behavior)

   b. This animal can _____

      (Identify the replacement behavior)

   Example: Rather than biting my hand, this parrot can lean away.

6. Desired behavior: What behavior do you ultimately want the parrot to exhibit?

    a. When _____

          (Summarize antecedents)

    b. This animal_____

          (Identify desired behavior)

    c. In order to _____

          (Summarize "payoffs")

    Example: When I offer my hand, this parrot can step up, in order to get a ride to the play tree.

7. What has been tried so far to change the problem behavior?

8. Preliminary strategies: Can I do something differently or change something in the environment so that the behavior doesn't occur in the first place?

    a. I could make adjustments related to WHEN the problem behavior is likely to occur by:

    b. I could make adjustments related to WHERE the problem behavior is likely to occur by:

    c. I could make adjustments related to the ACTIVITY during which the problem behavior is likely to occur by:

    d. I could make adjustments related to the PEOPLE present when the problem behavior is likely to occur by:

    e. I could teach/re-teach a behavior such as:

    f.   I could adjust some aspect of the environment by adding, removing or changing an item or condition such as?

    g.   Other adjustments that can be made are:

9.   Training strategies: What skill(s) will the animal need to be taught in order to successfully demonstrate the replacement behavior?

_____

    a.   Who will provide the training?

    b.   When will the training take place?

    c.   Where will the training take place?

    d.   How often will training take place?

    e.   How and how often will opportunities for practice be provided?

10. Reinforcement procedures: What will I do to increase the occurrence of the replacement/desired behavior?

    a.   Identify potential reinforcers: What preferred items, activities or people might be used as incentives in an intervention for this animal?

    b.   Establish specific behavior criteria: What exactly must the animal do to earn the above reinforcers?

    c.   Determine the schedule of reinforcement: How frequently can the animal earn the above reinforcers. Typically, continuous reinforcement (a reinforcer for every correct behavior) is best.

11. Reduction Procedures: What will I do to decrease the occurrence of the problem behavior?

    a.   I will ignore all occurrences, immediately attending to something else by:

    b.   I will stop and redirect each occurrence of the behavior by:

    c.   I will implement time out from positive reinforcement by:

    d.   Other strategies:

12. Implementation details: What other details or explanations would help another person implement this plan accurately and consistently?

13. Tracking change: How can I monitor the animal's behavior so I have a reliable record of progress and can continue or modify the plan as needed?

    a.   Describe exactly how data will be collected and recorded.

        i.   Frequency count of the target behaviors across the day.

        ii.   Frequency count from ___:___ am/pm to ___:___am/pm

        iii.   Timing duration of target behaviors.

        iv. Other

14. Evaluating outcomes: This program will be considered successful if what outcome is achieved by both the animal and the caregivers, under what conditions?

_____ → _____
Desired Behavior   Consequence

↗

_____ → _____ → _____ → _____
Setting Event   Antecedent   Problem Behavior   Consequence

↘   ↗

_____
Replacement Behavior

Environmental Changes to Make the Problem Behavior
Irrelevant, Ineffective, and Inefficient for the Learner

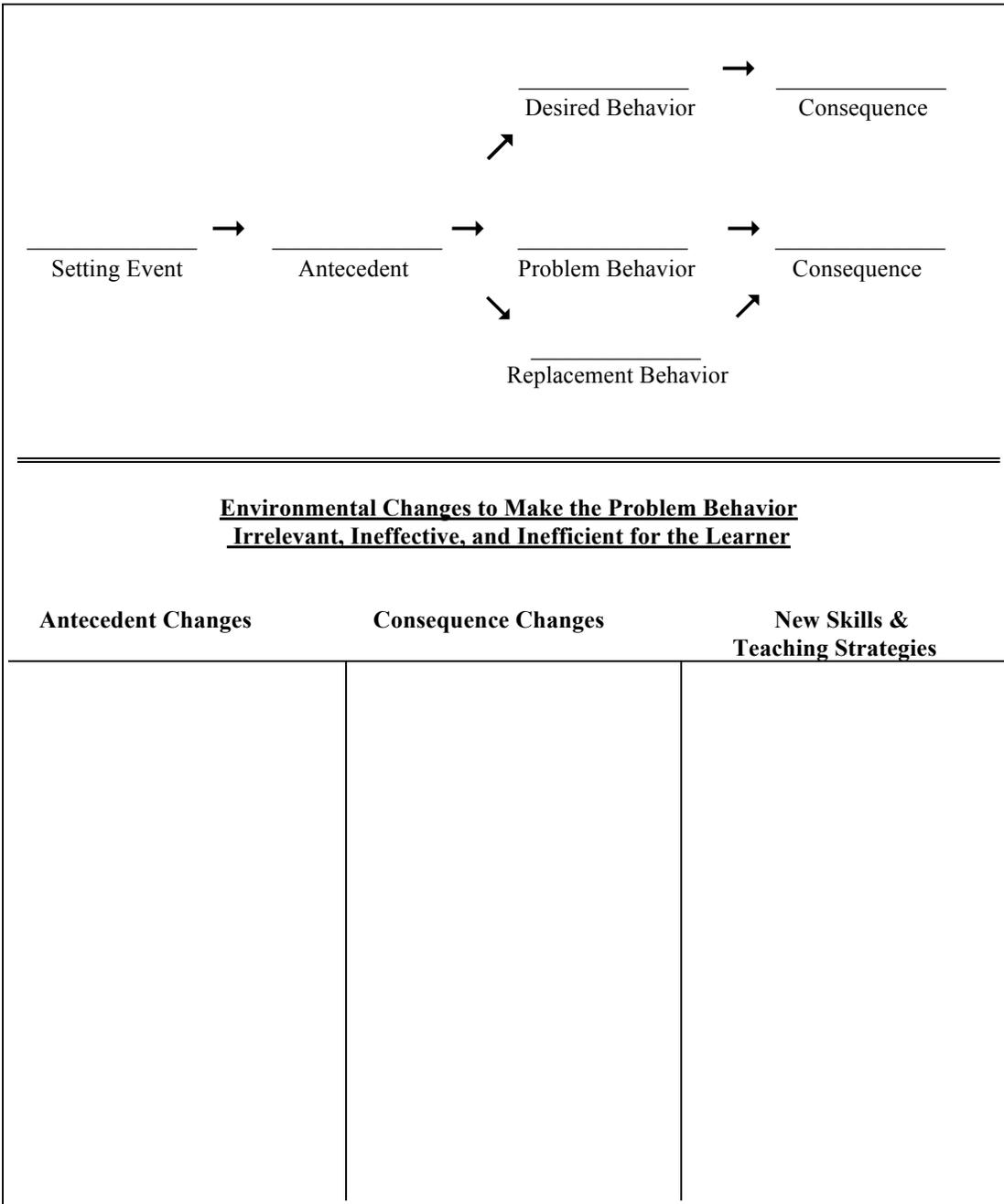| Antecedent Changes	Consequence Changes	New Skills & Teaching Strategies

Figure 2, shows a diagram of the functional assessment and alternate behavior paths, and a form on which to list possible strategies to make the problem behavior irrelevant, ineffective and inefficient.