PRIME

Planning Realistic Implementation and Maintenance by Educators

Problem-Solving Consultation

A Guide

A Brief Introduction to Project PRIME

PRIME is a system of implementation supports designed to increase treatment integrity, the extent to which an intervention is implemented as planned. We know that evidence-based interventions need to be implemented with a high level of treatment integrity to maximize student outcomes; however research shows that most implementers struggle to maintain adequate levels of treatment integrity after just a few days. For this reason, school-based consultants should promote implementers' levels of treatment integrity through the utilization of PRIME supports.

The evaluation of treatment integrity in applied settings is also an important factor in determining the functional relationship between interventions and student outcomes. Decisions about increasing or decreasing supports are data-based when treatment integrity data are considered in conjunction with student outcome data. For more information about PRIME, the theoretical model behind PRIME, and treatment integrity, please see Chapters 1, 2, and 5 of the PRIME Manual.

PRIME Implementation Support strategies are delivered within an indirect problem-solving model. The purpose of this prerequisite guide is to provide a brief overview of the prerequisite skill of engaging in problem-solving consultation.

What Will This Guide Tell Me?

PRIME Implementation Support strategies are delivered within an indirect problem-solving model. That is, the consultant does not work directly with the student, but the consultant works with the implementer who then works with the student. One indirect problem-solving model is Problem-Solving Consultation (also called Behavioral Consultation), which was used in studies to evaluate PRIME Implementation Supports and is referred to extensively in the PRIME Manual. The purpose of this prerequisite guide is to introduce the characteristics and core components of Problem-Solving Consultation, providing an overview of the steps required to engage in problem-solving consultation in a school setting. After reading this guide, you will be able to describe this model, identify the four stages of the model, and highlight the responsibilities of the consultant in each stage.

What is Problem-Solving Consultation?

Problem-solving consultation "involves indirect services to a client (e.g., a child) who is served through a consultee (or implementer, e.g., a teacher), by a consultant (e.g., a psychologist)" (Kratochwill & Bergan, 1990, p.26). The consultant helps the consultee (often referred to as the "implementer" in PRIME materials) identify a problem related to the child, analyze the environmental variables and skill deficits contributing to the problem, design an intervention plan that addresses the problem, implement the intervention plan, and evaluate the effectiveness and integrity of implementation. The information in this guide is based on the problem-solving consultation process described in Kratochwill and Bergan's (1990) Behavioral Consultation in Applied Settings: An Individual Guide. Readers are referred to this resource for a further discussion of problem-solving consultation.

Roles in Consultatation

There are three important roles in problem-solving consultation: (a) the consultant, (b) the consultee, and (c) the client. The consultant is the school-based professional (e.g., school psychologist, instructional coach) who guides the consultee through each stage of consultation. The intervention implementer serves as the consultee, and the client (e.g., student, child) benefits from the intervention designed by the consultant and consultee.

Defining Characteristics of Consultation

1. The consultee seeks outside assistance from the consultant because he/she has knowledge and skills relevant to the client's problem.
2. The consultant and consultee use problem-solving strategies to address student concerns and the needs of the consultee.
3. The consultant provides services to the client indirectly, by working directly with the consultee to develop an intervention.

The Stages of Problem-Solving Consultation
STAGE 1: PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

The first stage of problem-solving consultation is a process of defining the specific problem that the consultee has brought to the consultant. Through this stage, the consultant and client identify the goals of consultation related to the problem, measure the current level of client performance, and assess the discrepancy between this current level of performance and the desired level of client performance. Accurate problem identification is critical because it is the basis for designing and implementing an effective intervention. Without an accurately identified problem, the appropriate intervention cannot be selected.

Problem Identification Interview (PII)

The goal of the PII is to assist the consultant and consultee in col-laboratively specifying the objectives of consultation and to select measures for assessing these objectives. All information may not be determined in one interview. Several sessions may be necessary to meet all the objectives of the PII. The three categories of objectives for the problem identification interview are: (a) goal specification, (b) performance assessment, and (c) procedural specification.

Goal Specification Objectives for the Problem-Centered Approach
• Elicit a precise description of the behavior concerns from the consultee
• Obtain behavioral descriptions of the client's functioning from the consultee
• Determine behaviors that are essential to the definition of the problem
• Obtain descriptions of the antecedent, consequent, and sequential conditions surrounding the problem behavior or academic concern
• Identify the strength of the problem behavior or severity of the academic concern

Goal Specification Objectives for the Developmental Approach
• Identify broad goals for client
• Specify identified broad goals as general and subordinate goals
• Develop an organized hierarchy of general and subordinate goals
• Specify performance objectives related to each subordinate goal, which may take place over an extended period of time, focusing on a limited set of performance objectives for the immediate future

Performance Assessment Objectives
• Collaboratively select a measure to assess client behavior
• Answer the following measurement questions:
        • What will be recorded?

- How will data be recorded?
- How much data will be recorded?
- What will the recording schedule be?
- Who will collect data?

Procedural Objectives in Problem Identification
• Schedule a day and time for the next interview (PAI) within approximately one week
• Arrange to contact the consultee to monitor integrity of baseline data collection
• Ensure that the definitions of the problem behavior are written in objective, operational terms
• Summarize the important points of the meeting and check for a consensus and shared understanding of the problem

Collect Baseline Data

Using the measurement system agreed upon during the PII, the consultee or consultant will collect baseline data on the target behavior (i.e., problem behavior or academic concern) following this first meeting. Chapter 6 of the PRIME Manual provides more information about methods for collecting baseline data, and Chapter 8 describes how to graph and interpret these data.

Once baseline data are collected, the consultant should see a clear discrepancy between the current level of performance of the target behavior and the expected level of performance, as specified in the goals from the PII. The magnitude of this discrepancy will likely warrant intervention.

STAGE 2: PROBLEM ANALYSIS

An intervention developed through problem-solving consultation will focus on changing the conditions surrounding the target behavior, teaching the client the skills required to produce the target behavior, or both. In the analysis phase, the consultant and consultee

must decide whether the conditions or skills should be considered for intervention and which conditions or skills should be changed.

Problem Analysis Interview (PAI)

The purpose of the PAI is to facilitate analysis of the conditions and skills that should be modified to address the problem targeted in consultation and develop a plan to accomplish the goals of consultation. The four categories of objectives for the problem analysis interview are: (a) problem validation, (b) analysis, (c) plan design and (d) procedural.

Problem Validation Objectives

 • Determine the adequacy of the baseline data by examining a graph of data collection from Stage 1
 • Determine whether a discrepancy exists between the client's present performance and desired performance by comparing baseline data to the level of performance specified in the client's goals
 • Establish agreement between the consultant and consultee concerning the existence of a problem

Analysis Objectives

 • Determine the conditions and/or skills that may influence the client's attainment of goals
 • Search for information about evidence-based intervention strategies used to build the client's skills required for accomplishing goals

Plan Design Objectives

 • Establish plan strategies that will be used to address the problem
 • Establish plan tactics that will serve as the procedures, materials, personnel, and conditions of the intervention
 • Establish performance assessment procedures to monitor

progress towards goals and skill development throughout implementation

Procedural Objectives
 • Set a date for the Treatment Evaluation Interview, allowing no more than a few weeks to elapse between the start of implementation and evaluation
 • Establish plans for communicating the initial implementation to address questions or concerns from those implementing the intervention
 • Establish plans for professional development for the consultee, if necessary training in procedures is required for successful implementation

STAGE 3: TREATMENT IMPLEMENTATION

   A formal interview is not conducted in the treatment implementation stage. Even without a planned interview, the consultant should be aware of several objectives to be completed as part of the steps of implementation: (a) skill development, (b) implementation monitoring, and (c) plan revisions. These objectives are met through three types of consultative interactions.

Skill Development Objectives
• Assess the executor's skills to determine whether they have the skills necessary to effectively perform implementation procedures
• Select training procedures
• Design the materials, procedures, and schedule for skill development
• Implement skill development procedures
• Evaluate goal attainment for implementation skills

Implementation Monitoring Objectives*
• Determine whether data collection of client behavior and

implementation procedures is occurring according to plan, including when, how, and what behaviors are measured

• Determine whether the plan is proceeding as designed through the collection of treatment integrity data (more information is available in Chapter 5 of the PRIME Manual)

Plan Revision Objectives

• Identify when there is a need to change the plan, which would occur in two situations, when there is: (a) a lack of agreement between implementation and the implementation plan, or (b) a lack of behavior change in the client

• Make a revision plan, if necessary

See Chapter 9 of the PRIME Manual for guidelines regarding data-based decisions

Consultative Interactions during Stage 3

Because there is no interview associated with the treatment implementation stage, the consultant guides the consultation process in ways other than formal meetings.

• *Brief Contact* – Brief contact with the consultee should take only a few minutes, and allow the consultant to monitor implementation and discuss plan revisions, client progress, and future meetings with the consultee.

• *Observation* – Observation can also be a way to monitor intervention implementation. Skills training and the development of plan revisions are other functions of observation.

• *Training Session(s)* – Training sessions outside of the intervention setting serve to develop the consultee's skills and involve the specification of training objectives and procedures, measuring progress towards training goals, and scheduling further sessions.

STAGE 4: TREATMENT EVALUATION

Following a suitable period of intervention implementation in Stage 3, the treatment evaluation stage of consultation concerns

the evaluation of goal attainment, effectiveness, and treatment acceptability of the intervention. Consideration of post-implementation planning is the last step in Stage 4.

Treatment Evaluation Interview (TEI)

This interview will help determine whether the goals of consultation have been achieved, if it is necessary to return to problem identification or analysis, and what type of post-implementation plan should be established. The four categories of objectives for the TEI are: (a) goal attainment, (b) consultation guidance, (c) plan effectiveness, (d) post-implementation planning, and (e) procedural issues.

Goal Attainment Objectives
• Establish the extent to which all goals are met by: (a) comparing the goals defined during the PII to the summarized data from the treatment implementation stage and (b) asking the consultee for judgment on the extent of goal attainment

Consultation Guidance Objectives
• Using the information provided in the goal attainment evaluation section (describe above), determine next steps (i.e., continuation of the intervention, modification of the intervention or measurement system, or Tier 2 or 3 PRIME supports – see Chapter 9 on data-based decision making)

Post-implementation Planning Objectives
• Select a post-implementation plan alternative (i.e., How will the intervention be maintained and eventually faded?)
• Make provisions for post-implementation data recording
• Establish procedures that specify what to do in the event of problem recurrence

Procedural Objectives
• Schedule additional consultation meetings if one or more goals

of consultation have not been achieved
• End consultation if all goals have been achieved

What Did I Learn?

This guide provides an outline of the process for engaging in problem-solving consultation, an indirect problem-solving model, in which the consultant works with the implementer who then works with the student (i.e., client). Problem-solving consultation consists of four stages: problem identification, problem analysis, treatment implementation, and treatment evaluation. Through these stages, baseline data are collected and an assessment-informed intervention plan is developed, implemented, and evaluated. Three primary benefits to problem-solving consultation include: (a) it allows the consultant to have a broader impact within the school, as the consultee will gain knowledge and skills that can be used to solve similar problems in the future; (b) it emphasizes developing an effective intervention rather than spending time assessing all of the student's difficulties, and (c) the consultant and the consultee develop a collegial relationship in which they each use their own set of expert knowledge and skills to engage in successful problem-solving.

References

Kratochwill, T. R., & Bergan, J. R. (1990). *Behavioral consultation in applied settings: An individual guide.* New York: Plenum Press.

Sanetti, L. M. H., Kratochwill, T. R., Collier-Meek, M. A., & Long, A. C. (2014). *PRIME Manual: Planning Realistic Implementation and Maintenance by Educators.* Retrieved from: www.primeimplementation.com