POSITIVE SUPPORT PLAN

Functional Assessment

1. Screaming/Hitting his chair: The functions of screaming and/or hitting his chair may be protest/escape, attention, and sensory stimulation or an indication of pain. (This is his most common problem behavior.)

 2. Grabbing others/Pulling hair: He may grab others to protest an activity which he does not want to perform or participate in, to escape an uncomfortable or perceived insecure environment, or to communicate that he is sick or in pain. (He will attempt to do this with new staff to gauge their reaction.)

Preventing

• Picture Symbol Schedule - A picture symbol schedule should be reviewed with him each morning. It helps him understand what is planned for the day. While you are talking through the schedule your excitement and interest help him prepare for the day.

• Verbal Attention – He wants to engage in conversation even though his topics of conversation are limited. If you do not respond to his initiations, he will repeat them in increasing volume. He often learns a new language just by listening and echoing at first. But as words are repeated in a context, he learns the pattern and initiates their use. You can also give him a "play by play" of any task you are engaging in with him.

• Voice techniques to gain his attention/cooperation - Try whispering, singing, counting or using rhymes when providing instruction.

• Response time - Be aware that he needs additional time to respond. No response does not always indicate noncompliance. He may not have understood the direction or may be focusing on something else in the environment of which you are not aware. Allow at least 20 seconds after giving a directive. If it is necessary to give a directive again, try rephrasing it or using one of the voice techniques listed above. Providing an additional cue (e.g., auditory, gestural, or physical) may be helpful. Providing information about the function or meaningfulness of the activity may also provide motivation for engagement. Also, be aware that his verbal responses to direct questions may be very quiet.

• Schedule review- When he is having difficulty completing an activity or following a direction, indicating that a preferred activity will follow the current activity may be helpful. For example, " When you finish \_\_\_\_\_\_, we can take a break and do \_\_\_\_\_\_\_." He needs to understand why it is to his advantage to engage in an activity which is non-preferred and may not be meaningful to him. Always follow through after providing a contingency, otherwise he may not trust you to follow through the next time you try to use one to motivate him to complete a difficult task.

• Provide choices - Try to provide at least one choice per activity. Choices can be given in a number of ways. These include choices within activities such as about the materials to be used or the order of activities, choices between activities, choices about who to do the activity with, where to do it, when to do it, choices about participating in or ending an activity. It is not appropriate to offer all of these choices for all activities. Sometimes, participation is not optional, but having a choice about when to do it or what will follow it, will prevent problem behavior from occurring.

• Use indirect verbal prompts - When working with him, it is better to ask him the next step in the routine rather than telling him what he needs to do. For example, after he has completed part of his morning ADLs, ask him what comes next.

• Physical attention - like all of us, he has a need for physical attention as well as verbal. Some grabbing/hard pats on the back are attempts to get physical attention, so if he can receive it before he tries to gain it in other ways it's very helpful. Peers can "give him five", squeeze his shoulder, give him a friendly punch, play hand games, or arm wrestle to meet his need for physical contact.

• When there is an unplanned change in routine, or when he is suddenly interrupted in the middle of a task and asked to move somewhere else, provide him with a break time activity (e.g. music), before asking him to start work on something new.

• Parallel talk: When dealing with a situation that is known to be difficult for him, engage in parallel talk. Discuss at a rather rapid, even rate the next favored activity that will take place, who he will see, what materials he will use, who he'd like to call on the phone to tell about it, etc.... As he comments (sometimes, on what you are talking about, sometimes, on his area of concern), incorporate his comments into your spiel and then move back to a neutral area of discussion (e.g., M: We're going to \_\_\_\_ and we'll see \_\_\_\_\_\_. R: Need dentist. M: What does the dentist tell you to do? Does he tell you to brush your teeth? When you get home you can brush your teeth. And then you can shave.)

Teaching

• Rule Rehearsal - Talking about the rules and/or expectations of an upcoming activity, and asking him to repeat them will help him attend to them for a period of time. Limiting it to 2 key rules and everyone using the same cues is important. For example, "We are going to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We will see \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Remember you need to use a quiet voice and keep your hands to yourself. Please tell me quiet voice and hands by self." He may not say it completely so accept any attempt to say the rules. Emphasizing the people involved helps him to be at ease through transitions and others' enthusiasm will rub off on him.

• Rapport Building/Pretask Requests - If he is about to begin a new task/activity or one that is not desired at the moment, building rapport by asking him easy questions first is important. Asking him "How are you today? Are you wearing a black shirt? or Give me five" allows him to comply and builds a pattern of compliance. His relationship with others is important to him and this builds that rapport.

• Model and Wait - Another way to begin a new task with him is to let him watch first so he can choose to participate. Wait for him to show interest and then ask him to join in the activity.

• Praise - Once he has begun an activity, praise him for participating or following the rules. "You are doing a good job." "That's good talking." Then near the end of an activity "You are really doing a good job. I'm impressed or You should be proud of yourself."

• Reinforcement - When he does follow the rules for a period of time you can offer him a choice of reinforcers: writing a good note, calling someone like mom 368-0726, snacks, music, or a leisure activity.

• Relaxation – He uses deep breathing and counting, squeezing his hand to relax. These behaviors can be prompted by saying “Breathe… Count” and by modeling the behavior. When he begins to get upset or excited, try to initiate his use of this strategy by telling him to "Relax" and providing specific directions. Help him to identify how he is feeling, ask him to repeat it, and then talk about what he can do to relax when he feels that way.

• Functional - Try to make activities as functional as possible for him, that is, he sees the result of what he is doing as useful for him or someone else.

Reacting

If He appears to be angry, follow these steps:

• Move to his right side and out of reach of his long arms

• Talk to him calmly, practically whispering

• Redirect him to what he should be doing now in a confident, calm voice.

• Ask him to take deep breaths and model it dramatically for him.

• Avoid showing nervousness or anger. In new environments or once he has become nervous or angry, his internal locus of control is lost. So the external locus of control is very important. If others become nervous or angry, it accelerates his nervousness or anger. Being calm won't always cause him to calm down immediately, but in our experience it often prevents the acceleration of anger and frustration.

• Praise him as soon as he begins to calm.

• If he does not calm down, ask him what music he would like to listen to – if he says “Rudolf,” play Christmas music even if it is July.

• If he starts making requests loudly, tell him you will help him if he asks in a calm voice.

• If he just cannot settle down, call Vicki (314-368-0726). She will try to help him calm down over the phone.

• If he cannot calm down, we will assume he is sick and arrange for him to see the doctor.

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If he is behaving fearful:

• Assess the environment for what may be causing him distress. He is afraid of medical/dental staff and their apparatus and items which he perceives to be related to them (e.g., steel tables, cameras on tripods, people dressed in all white, barber's razor)

• Assure him that it is not for him, or not what he believes it to be.

• Prompt him to ask to leave in an appropriate manner and then allow him to leave the setting.

• If it is an environment that he needs to be acclimated to, plan for systematic desensitization activities.

If he is complaining of pain:

• Ignore it the first time and redirect him to what he should be doing.

• If he continues, ask him to tell or show you where it hurts, and ask him if he needs to rest. If he says "no" redirect him to the activity and praise him as soon as possible for any participation.

• He may use these behaviors (screaming, hitting the table or his chair, grabbing others, throwing or knocking over materials) to indicate that he is not feeling well or that he is afraid. Other signals which may occur prior to these include: head swaying, rocking, walking in circles, asking to call Mom and making generic complaints about his health. He needs to learn to communicate needs about physical and emotional distress more specifically. When these signals are seen and he is believed to be ill, the following script can be used: I see that you are \_\_\_\_\_\_ing, can you tell me how you are feeling? his response may be nonverbal (e.g., finger in mouth on canker sore). If it is, reflect back what you think is bothering him and ask him to repeat it. Then ask, "Would \_\_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., Tylenol, cold cloth, back rub, taking a rest) make it feel better?

• Sometimes, just feeling that he is being heard and his needs addressed will allow him to cope. Other times, two or three things may be bothering him, and he may not be able to cope with the combination and it is appropriate for him to rest at home.