Positive Supports to Promote Toilet Training for Students with Disabilities

Toilet Training in the Classroom

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Toilet Training Methods

- Intensive Toilet Training
  - Highly structured protocol with ½ hour to 1 hour training intervals throughout the day
  - Usually encourages increased fluid intake to prompt toileting opportunities
  - Intensive, short-term training of 2-3 weeks, then a period of generalization and maintenance
  - Toileting skills usually acquired in a shorter period of time
- Schedule Training
  - Toilet sitting based on the child's natural patterns of elimination
  - Generally requires a longer period of time before continence is achieved.

Determining Readiness

- Shows discomfort or recognition of wet/soiled diapers
- Maintains dry diaper for ½ hour or more
- Age over 4 ½
- Shows interest in the toileting activities of others
- Displays no fears of being in, on or around the bathroom or toilet (if fears exist, deal with them first with behavioral desensitization program)
- Physician's exam to rule out medical/physical causes
- Consultation with physical therapist: adaptive equipment addressed and in place before beginning program
- Communication system in place
- Parental interest or request

Determining which Protocol or Methodology to Use:

- Ambulatory vs. non-ambulatory
- Commitment/attitude of staff
- Availability of "resources"

Getting Started

- Review and understand each procedure in the training protocol
- Train assistants and others who will be sharing toilet training duties
- When ready, schedule a conference with parents or guardians

Parent Conference

- Provide a copy of the training protocol for parents to keep
- Explain the procedures
- Ask parents to talk to student's physician regarding feasibility of toilet training
  - May want a signature
- Do you need to modify the student's IEP to include a toileting goal?

Parent Conference cont.

- Obtain written permission from parents
- Agree on a starting and review date
- Discuss and agree on terminology that will be used (including communication signals and mands)
- Provide parents with a "materials list" of items you want them to provide from home

Intensive Training: General Philosophy

- Intensive, 2-4 week commitment
- Pre-determined, time based toileting schedule
- Use of positive reinforcement – No punishment component
- Modified version of Foxx & Azrin's toileting procedure
- Increased fluid intake to maximize opportunities for practice
- Training occurs in the classroom and is then generalized to home
- Minimizes stress to families and caregivers for training responsibilities

Toilet Training Should Be A Positive Experience!!

- High levels of positive reinforcement
  - Rewards or reinforcement must be based on the child's likes and preferences
  - Offer incentives and rewards for:
    - Appropriate toilet sitting
    - Dry pants
    - Appropriate elimination on toilet
    - Attempts to assist with dressing/undressing
    - compliance
- No punishment component!
  - Accidents should be expected
    - Take precautions that accidents won't upset you or the student
      - Plan ahead and be prepared for accidents
      - Keep in mind the complexity of the task to be learned!

Training Intervals

- 30 minute training intervals
  - 15 minutes toilet sitting
  - 15 minutes dry pants checks off toilet
- Example:
  - 8:00-8:15 sitting on the toilet
    - May be looking at books or singing songs
    - 15 minutes
  - 8:15-8:30 dry pants checks
    - Sitting on a chair face to face with trainer
    - May be looking at books or playing with toys
    - Check every 5 minutes until 8:30

If Success Occurs:

- Praise and reward with highly prized reinforcer while still on the toilet
- With least amount of prompting necessary direct student to stand up from toilet, pull up pants, walk to chair
- Begin dry pants checks at 5 minute intervals until the next ½ hour training interval begins
- Start new training interval on the ½ hour

Dry Pants Checks

- Student and trainer sit in chairs in bathroom or just outside bathroom door
- Trainer sets timer for 5 minutes
- When timer rings trainer has student check for dry pants
- Reinforce with social praise paired with desirable, thirst promoting treat or desirable fluids
- Trainer sets timer for next 5 minute dry pants check
- New training interval begins on the ½ hour

Caution!

- Students should never be forced to drink fluids!
- Adults are "in charge" and should limit the amount of fluid intake for students who willingly consume fluids
- Excess fluid consumption can lead to serious health emergencies & in extreme cases, death
- No more than 12 ounces of fluids should be consumed in an hour
- Watch to see that as student consumes water, urination occurs

If an Accident Occurs:

- Use a calm or neutral voice for informational feedback, "Your pants are wet. You need to use the toilet."
- Direct student to toilet using the least amount of prompting necessary
  - Student pulls down & takes off wet clothing
  - Sits on the toilet for the remainder of the 30 minute interval (or 15 minutes, whichever is less)
- Begin new training interval on the ½ hour

Generalizing to the Classroom

- Move the student from the bathroom into the classroom.
- At this time the student can engage in regularly scheduled classroom activities but will be "interrupted" frequently to participate in toileting skills.
- Trainer systematically increases the time between toileting trips (based on student data)
  - 45 minute schedule
  - 1 hour schedule
  - 1 ½ hour schedule etc.
- Extra fluids are no longer offered.
- Trainer systematically increases length of time between dry pants checks (based on student data)
  - 7 minutes
  - 12 minutes
  - Etc.
- Trainer begins to fade the use of edible reinforcers for dry pants to an intermittent schedule

Generalizing to Home

- Once the student is successfully maintaining dry pants (2 or fewer accidents per day) on a 1 hour schedule at school, training can begin at home.
- The parent takes the student to the toilet every hour & reinforces dry pants before the student toilet sits.
- A highly desired reinforcer is used for successful elimination on the toilet.
- Accidents are treated in a matter-of-fact fashion.
- Parent should put student in a diaper at bedtime and when an accident is likely or would be stigmatizing during outings or social events.

"High Probability" Schedule Training Toileting Approach

Schedule Training: General Philosophy

- Track the child's natural schedule of elimination
- "Predict" the time episodes of elimination are likely and toilet the child around those times
- Use of positive reinforcement
- No punishment component
- Long term commitment to toilet training
- Training occurs in the classroom and is then generalized or trained in the home
- Minimizes stress to families & caregivers for training responsibilities
- Uses routines and environmental S_D to elicit appropriate toileting response
- Use of consistent signals or communication mands to develop relationships between actions and consequences

Collect Baseline Data

- Check diaper on ½ hour intervals for 2 weeks or until patterns emerge
- Look for
  - Trends or patterns of dryness
  - Trends or patterns in times of wetness/defecation
- Develop a "high probability" schedule placing the student on the toilet 15 minutes before predicted occurrence so that elimination is likely to happen while toilet sitting.

If Success Occurs:

Reinforce student with social praise paired with highly desired reinforcer

Immediately remove student from toilet and put in a clean diaper

Return student to regular programming

- Mark data sheet
- Place student on toilet at next scheduled "high probability" time

If No Elimination Occurs:

- Leave student on the toilet for 15 minutes
  - Student may be playing with toys while sitting
- Remove student from the toilet after 15 minutes and put in a clean diaper
- Return student to regular class routine
- Wait ½ hour and place the student on the toilet again for 15 minutes of toilet sitting
- Repeat ½ hour intervals until elimination occurs
- Return to the original "high probability" schedule

If an Accident Occurs:

- Give informational feedback in a neutral tone: "Your pants are wet, you need to use the toilet".
- Place student on the toilet for 15 minutes of toilet sitting
- If elimination occurs on the toilet, treat as a toilet success and R+
- Remove student from the toilet after 15 minutes of toilet sitting and put in a clean diaper
- Return student to regular classroom programming and mark data sheet
- Continue with original "high probability" schedule

Generalizing to Home

- Once the student is urinating when placed on the toilet 60% of opportunities, training should be extended to the home.
- Parent tracks wet/dry pants and creates a "high probability" toileting schedule for home.

Trouble Shooting Toilet Training

- This slide show describes basic toilet training protocols
- Other toileting related problems may occur
- Two good source for ideas are:
  - *Toilet Training for Individuals with Autism & Related Disorders* by Maria Wheeler (1998), Future Horizons Publishing
  - *A Work in Progress* by Ron Leaf and John McEachin (1999), DRL Books, L.L.C, New York, NY.