

Case Assessment And Intervention

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Abstract

In this case assessment information regarding Jane a two- year old child is outlined including presenting problems related to her case. The author describes details surrounding Jane's assessment as well as intervention strategies that were created to best support Jane. The author details how the generalist practice model and the planned change model were used in her case. The author goes on to describe relevant theories that may impact her case as well as issues relating to human diversity. Finally, the author gives insight into what termination of services may look like for Jane and how policies created by the agency may negatively impact her case.

Keywords : Childhood, intervention, education

Jane is a two-year-old child that attends preschool at Weinstein JCC and has been referred to the inclusion and support team for services. Jane lives with her mother and father and is an only child. While Jane's father works full time her mother is a stay-at-home mom. Jane does not have any diagnosed conditions and it was reported by her mother that her birth was typical. Jane was referred for services at the JCC by the director of the inclusion and support team. Jane was referred to services due to concerns with her behavior in the classroom. These behaviors include biting, hitting, kicking, screaming, and refusing to complete tasks given to her by her preschool teachers. Her behaviors have been directed at her teachers and the other students in the classroom as well. The first assessment was conducted by a previous employee who is a licensed clinical social worker. The assessment occurred in Jane's classroom so that the social worker could witness her behaviors in her typical setting. No other information was collected during the assessment as her file already contained other important information such as family history from when she first enrolled in preschool.

It was found during this assessment that Jane's behavior is distracting to the classroom, as well as detrimental to the emotional well-being of the other children as they began to fear her. After the initial assessment, a parent-teacher conference took place at her preschool which included involvement from the inclusion and support team. It was decided during this meeting that the teachers would begin to document when Jane is violent, including what happened before she engaged in the behavior. Jane was also referred to an occupational therapist who sees her twice a week, once in her classroom and once at the clinic. Factors that were included in her assessment included her age. It is typical for two-year-olds to exhibit the behaviors Jane does such as biting, however, it is the frequency of her behaviors that are problematic. Issues that impact Jane's case include her lack of pragmatic language. Jane's behaviors although harmful do

still serve a purpose which is letting the adults know she needs something or is upset. Jane is encouraged to use language to communicate what she needs, but the lack of pragmatic language serves as a roadblock. Jane's primary goal is to be able to start self-regulating strong emotions, so she is able to learn to ask for assistance. It is also the goal that Jane learning how to ask for assistance and beginning to self-regulate helps decrease the frequency of her harmful behavior such as biting.

The generalist practice model was also utilized during this case. The generalist practice model breaks down interventions that can occur at different levels. On a micro-level, Jane receives individual occupational therapy once a week in a clinical setting. On a mezzo level, which utilizes the individual's community, Jane also sees her occupational therapist once a week in her classroom. This is done so that she is not only observed in her natural environment but so that the occupational therapist can work with her on how she interacts with her peers. Lastly, on a macro level, the people involved with her case which includes her parents, the inclusion and support team, a social work intern, and her teachers must make sure all policies are being followed. Due to Jane's behaviors, it was discussed originally if she was going to be allowed to stay in the preschool program, however, the JCC's policy states that reasonable efforts to correct behavior and support the child must be made first. Since Jane is a child with identified needs the current policy protects her from being kicked out of preschool prematurely.

Values that were evident in supporting Jane included integrity and the importance of human relationships. Integrity and the importance of human relationships are both values that are described within the NASW code of ethics (NASW, 2018). Integrity is described in the NASW as acting in an ethical and honest manner while interacting with clients as well as while representing an agency. This is relevant as all involved in Jane's case must make sure that the

agency's policies are being followed (NASW, 2018). The importance of human relationships describes social workers as being in a partnership with their clients in order to achieve desired outcomes (NASW, 2018). This would mean that the client should be actively involved in forming their goals and treatment plan. In the case of Jane due to her age, her involvement is minimal, however, Jane's parents are included in all decisions regarding Jane's educational plan.

The planned change model was another model used in Jane's case. The planned change model is a seven-step process that outlines the different stages of planned change. The stages in this model are engagement, assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, termination, and follow-up. The engagement started when the teachers in Jane's classroom became concerned with Jane's behavior and reported it to the inclusion and support director. Assessment occurred when the inclusion and support director organized for a licensed clinical social worker to observe Jane in her classroom. Planning, which involved the inclusion and support team, the licensed clinical social worker who first assessed Jane, the teachers in her classroom, and Jane's parents, occurred after the initial assessment. Implementation is the current step that Jane's team is on. This stage consists of weekly meetings between the inclusion director and Jane's mom, and two occupational therapy visits a week. The evaluation step will occur during the last week of preschool between Jane's parents, teachers, and the inclusion staff director. The termination phase is determined by the evaluation and if Jane has made substantial progress or if her behavior is found to be too destructive for the classroom environment, as of now there is no definitive plan for the termination of services. The final stage is follow-up, which will occur after services have been terminated.

When working with children it is best practice to be competent in the different developmental stages of childhood. In this case, Piaget's stages of cognitive development were

used to determine where Jane may be cognitively. Piaget's stages are broken down into four categories which are sensorimotor, preoperational thought, concrete operations, and formal operations period (Lefmann, 2013). Each stage is determined by the child's age, in Jane's case, she would be in the preoperational stage as she is two years old and the preoperational thought stage lasts between ages two to seven. In this stage, some of the shared characteristics include the development of symbolic thought and egocentrism (Lefmann, 2013). Egocentrism is the inability to see beyond one's own perspective. This is relevant to Jane's case because a trigger for her harmful behavior is being told no. When Jane is told no she will often scream "but I want it" before carrying on with an action such as hitting or biting. By knowing that it is difficult for a child Jane's age to see outside of their own perspective, the various adults working with Jane such as the social work intern can use this information to adjust their language. For example, instead of telling her no, the teachers are now explaining to her why they are saying no and coming up with an alternative so she does not feel out of control. (Lefman, 2013)

There are various strengths that aid in Jane's educational plan, with her parents' dedication being one of them. After hearing about Jane's behavioral difficulties in school her parents took the initiative to find an occupational therapist for her to see per the recommendation of the inclusion staff director. Her mom is also attending weekly meetings with the inclusion director to discuss Jane's progress. In addition to this Jane's mom who is a stay-at-home mom has made herself available to pick Jane up early from school on days when her behavior is extreme. An extreme case of harmful behavior that would warrant being picked up early could be if she bit another child twice within an hour. Jane's parents outside of the weekly meetings regularly discuss with the teachers how they are helping her in the classroom so that they can continue what the teachers are doing at home to maintain consistency for Jane. With Jane's

parents maintaining her plan while at home her behavior at school has improved and her harmful behaviors have begun to decrease. Jane has also become receptive to being coached through calming herself which typically includes breathing exercises with the social work intern or her teachers.

This case may be impacted by diversity issues relating to social and economic status. Due to Jane being an only child and her mother not working it was assumed by various inclusion and support staff that her behavioral issues were caused by her parents. The staff waited to provide her with services and assess her because they thought since she was an only child she may be overly indulged at home. It was not until her behavior got progressively worse that an assessment was set up. This was problematic not only because it impacted her education, but it also prolonged the distress of other students and the teachers. Jane's screaming was so frequent that one of her teachers began to have daily migraines and the other students would cry around her or avoid her. This prevented Jane from being able to form connections with her peers which could have helped her to further develop her pragmatic language skills.

The effectiveness of Jane's intervention plan is currently being determined by observations of her behavior. When Jane does a less socially acceptable or harmful behavior such as screaming, hitting, scratching, or biting it is documented. The documentation also specifies what type of behavior she engaged in and the time it happened so that if the behavior is repeated within the same day her team knows how frequent the behavior is. If Jane continuously engages in harmful behavior within short periods of time, such as an hour, and this occurs every day for at least a week it is taken as a sign that something in her plan needs to be adjusted. It is a key point in her plan to not assume the intervention strategies are not working based on one day of harmful behavior. This is an important element because it prevents positive strategies from being

removed from her plan because of one day of harmful behavior that may be caused by Jane having a rough day. It would be unrealistic, given Jane's age, to base a strategy's effectiveness on what could be one day that may be particularly hard for Jane.

In Jane's case, termination of services will occur when Jane is able to go longer periods of time without having to have her harmful behavior documented. As of now, Jane is still engaging in at least two harmful behaviors a day, although some days this is much higher. Her services will be decreased over time, such as seeing her occupational therapist once a week instead of twice, when she is no longer needing continuous support. If this does not occur while Jane is enrolled in preschool the services provided by her preschool will be terminated when she goes on to elementary school. If she continues to utilize support until the end of her time with the preschool then the inclusion and support staff will discuss further steps for support, if necessary. This case would benefit from a follow-up if services are terminated during her time at the preschool to ensure Jane does not still need services provided.

One agency policy that implicates this case is a policy that states if a child needs a shadow, which is someone who supports just them during the day, then the family has to find the person to shadow them and pay for it. Jane's parents were asked during the initial family meeting to find Jane a shadow for when she is in school. Due to how progressed the school year is Jane's parents have been having a hard time finding Jane a shadow. They have asked for support in finding one, but the inclusion and support team has declined to help. As of now, this is not impacting Jane directly, however, when the social work intern leaves there will no longer be a person who primarily focuses on her. Since the teachers in Jane's classroom have ten other children to support they do not feel confident in their ability to successfully implement Jane's strategies alone. This is because the amount of one-on-one time Jane's strategies require is

unrealistic given the other young children in the classroom who also have needs to be met. Only two children in her classroom are potty trained, so simple tasks such as using the bathroom require a teacher's attention. If Jane's parents can not find a shadow and Jane's teachers are unable to support her then Jane may be unable to continue with the preschool she is already familiar with and is receiving services from.

References

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