

PICA Behavior

A Short Overview

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Learning Objectives

- List three things that someone with PICA behavior might seek out to swallow.
- Discuss each of the parts of a comprehensive assessment.
- Describe what is included in a safety plan.
- List three ways to prevent a PICA behavior from happening.

Three Frequently Asked Questions

What causes PICA behavior?

How is it assessed?

What should we do?

What is PICA behavior?

Put very simply, PICA is a behavioral disorder.

It is characterized by an appetite for things that have no nutritional value.

PICA IS A POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS
BEHAVIOR.

THERE SHOULD ALWAYS BE A PLAN
TO PREVENT THIS BEHAVIOR.

Some Examples

- ▶ Cigarette butts
- ▶ Glass
- ▶ Metal
- ▶ Feces

What causes PICA Behavior?

No one knows for sure, but the most likely causes probably include:

Medical Problems

Psychiatric Illnesses

Behavioral Functions

How is it assessed?

Steps of Assessment

A medical evaluation to rule out pain or another illness

A psychiatric evaluation to ensure that any psychiatric symptoms are managed

A functional behavioral assessment that describes the behavior

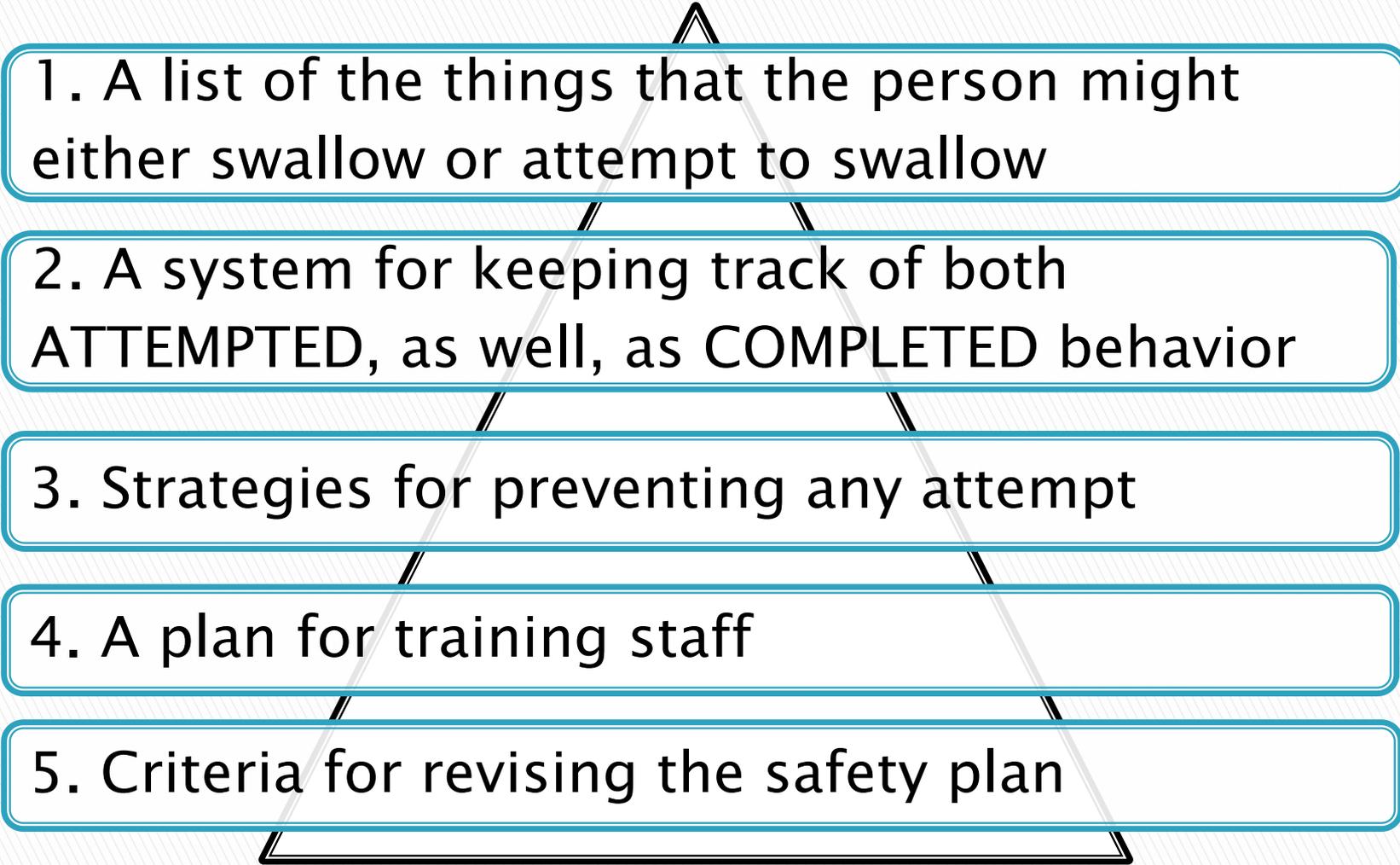
A functional behavioral assessment includes:

- How often the behavior happens
- How serious the behavior is
- What maintains it (its function)
- Possible reinforcers

What should we do?

**Develop a safety plan to
prevent the behavior**

Five Steps of Safety Plan



1. A list of the things that the person might either swallow or attempt to swallow

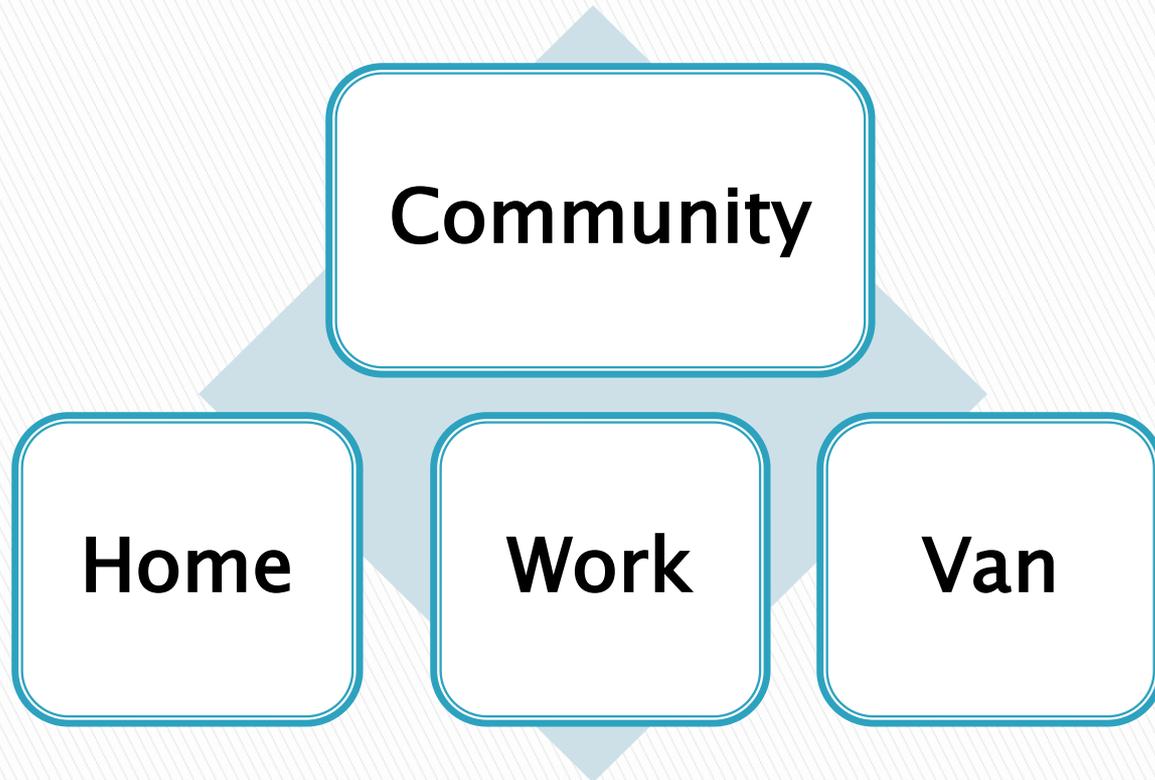
2. A system for keeping track of both ATTEMPTED, as well, as COMPLETED behavior

3. Strategies for preventing any attempt

4. A plan for training staff

5. Criteria for revising the safety plan

Safety plan procedures specific for all locations



Specific techniques for coping with PICA behavior

Techniques for coping with PICA behaviors fall into three groups:

Sweeping

Scheduling

Adapting

Interfering

Definition of Sweep

**Sweeping is...
a simple way
to identify potential
hazards in the area**

A sweep has five steps:

- ▶ ***Stop***--Keep the person from entering a new area before the sweep is done.
- ▶ ***Look***--Spot any possible hazards in area.
- ▶ ***Investigate***--Decide on the risk from of each the possible hazards.
- ▶ ***Document***--Keep track of the hazards that found.
- ▶ ***Eliminate***--Get rid of any likely hazards when it is feasible.

Adaptation

Adapting the person's daily tasks is usually required. An adaptation task has three steps:

- ▶ ***Assess***-- Look at each new task.
- ▶ ***Identify***--Spot the likely hazards for the person in the task.
- ▶ ***Modify***--Adapt the new task to remove them.

Avoidance

Avoiding some places at the times when a behavior is most likely to happen is a good way to prevent it. Avoiding a behavior has three steps:

- ▶ ***Locate*** the places the behavior is most likely to happen.
- ▶ ***Identify***--Spot the likely hazards for the person in each location.
- ▶ ***Plan***--Schedule to avoid the places at times it is most likely the behavior could happen.

Interference

Interfering with PICA behavior by giving the person other things to do can prevent it.

Preventing the behavior has three steps:

- ▶ ***Find***—Design tasks that get in the way of the behavior.
- ▶ ***Be*** sure that the tasks are safe for the person to do.
- ▶ ***Insure***—Assure that he can do the task.