

# Managing Aggressive Behavior (MAB) Training Contents

---

## ■ FOUNDATIONS

Introduction to Foundation

Defining Key Concepts –Aggression, Trauma, and the Trauma Response

Premises

Interaction Model

## ■ PREVENTION

Introduction to Prevention

Managing Our Bodies and Emotions

Creating a Supportive Environment

Having Realistic Expectations

Identifying and Supporting Individual Needs and Strengths

Avoiding the Misuse of Power

## ■ INTERVENTION

Introduction to Intervention

Understanding Crisis

Introduction to Blending

Nonverbal and Verbal Blending

Problem Solving/Conflict Resolution and Limit Setting

The Crisis Wave

Intervening Between Youth Nonphysical Intervention

Countering Physical Aggression through Blending

- Guidelines for Physical Intervention

- Physical Principles

- Support Statements

- Risk Factors

Releases

Standing Hold

Intervening Between Youth Physical Intervention

- Not Interlocked

- Interlocked

■ **POSTVENTION**

Introduction to Postvention

Managing Emotions – Letdown for Staff

Follow-up/Debrief Process

Documentation

Teaching New Skills through Strategic Responses:

- Effective Consequencing
- Using Activities and Games

## Managing Aggressive Behavior Premises

---

The content and learning objectives of this training course reflect a set of values about clients and the services they receive. Guided by key concepts and the most current principles of best practice, these values include issues related to using passive physical restraint and nonpain producing techniques, empowering young people toward self-control and self-determination, understanding the effect past trauma has on current behaviors, developing helping relationships with clients, providing culturally competent services, and emphasizing teamwork among youth care professionals.

This program will be most effective if the following premises or concepts are accepted by the trainer and also by the administrators and direct supervisors of the staff participating in the program.

### ■ Premise #1

---

*Children, youth, and their families are best served by a system and by staff that are trauma informed. Staff must understand how current behaviors are connected to the individual's trauma history and realize that our own actions and behaviors, as well as programmatic expectations, may retraumatize those in our care.*

“ Trauma informed care is not highly specialized and can be provided in multiple settings by all levels of staff involved in care— child and youth worker, therapists, administrators, cooks, teachers, social workers—who understand trauma without the expertise to offer trauma specific treatment (Hodas p. 6).

Staff who are truly trauma informed view behaviors, even those that are problematic and aggressive, as attempts by the youth to respond to and cope with the traumatic events in their lives. Trauma informed staff believe these behaviors serve a purpose and until the young person is helped to connect their current behavior to their traumatic past, it is difficult to assist the youth with change.

While programmatic expectations are important, our systems must be flexible enough to respond to the unique needs of every young person in care. Developing programs and relationships built on respect and trust, rather than on compliance and coercion, assure that positive change can occur.

## ■ Premise #2

---

*Youth and their families must be fully involved in their own assessments, planning, and services.*

- “ The concept of assessment and service from a strengths and needs perspective is vital. Critical to the strengths and needs assessment process is the involvement of clients in their own assessments and planning. Youth need direct access to the persons responsible for their case planning and implementation. They must also be involved to the fullest extent possible in their services and in planning for their own futures. In particular they should be instrumental in the development of their plan, to use when feeling unsafe or out-of-control, which includes their preferred coping skills. Families need to be involved as much as possible in what happens with their children. Therefore, they may need to be repeatedly reminded of opportunities, invited, and encouraged to be involved in the assessment, planning, and services.

## ■ Premise #3

---

*All aspects of service provision to youth and their families must be culturally responsive and strengths based.*

- “ Minority children, youth, and their families are often overrepresented in the human service system, while staffing is often not reflective of the population being served. The need for programmatic, policy, and service responsiveness to cultural and ethnic issues must be acknowledged and institutionalized. Sensitivity to gender, age, physical ability, and sexual orientation is also an inherent value within these premises. We can no longer afford to provide ethnocentric services. There are great strengths and resources to be found in a diverse society. Best practice and common sense tells us we must provide culturally sensitive and competent services to all in our community. Historically, the human service field has been problem focused and has tended to view children, youth and families from a deficit or weakness perspective—focusing on what is wrong with young people, rather than what happened to them, and then trying to fix it. All children, youth and families have strengths and competencies. We must identify and build upon the competencies, encouraging them to find additional solutions based on past or newly identified successes.

#### ■ Premise #4

---

*All behavior is an attempt to meet a need and therefore has meaning.*

- “ The behaviors we see are the attempts our clients make to cope with the trauma they have experienced. While these behaviors may not work in all settings, they have served an important purpose. Our job is to identify the needs individuals are attempting to meet through their behavior and teach more helpful ways to meet those needs. When we understand the reasons underlying behavior and how it connects to past traumatic events and developmental needs, we have the knowledge necessary to apply more effective interventions that can lead to prevention of aggressive behavior.

#### ■ Premise #5

---

*Persons acting aggressively must be encouraged to exercise self-control. Therefore, physical intervention using non-pain producing, passive, physical techniques, should only be used as a last resort and until the imminent danger has passed.*

- “ Staff must provide youth with boundaries—boundaries they can push against, test, and negotiate. Workers must understand the nature of aggressive and assaultive behavior, especially when used by youth, who, for various reasons are reacting instinctively to their world and their past traumas.

While staff must provide boundaries, these boundaries must not be so rigid that staff become inflexible or abusive. Our goal is not to merely contain and control behavior, but to teach new skills to use in times of stress. We must maintain control of ourselves and use the least amount of external control for the shortest amount of time in any intervention so that we preserve our dignity and the dignity of our clients.

## ■ Premise #6

---

*Relationships between staff and youth should provide opportunities for youth to learn and practice new, helpful ways to express feelings, manage daily tasks, and get needs met.*

“ Just as youths receiving services often have a trauma and loss history, they also have an attachment history. Some come with strong attachments, while others have a history of disruptive attachments. Attachment and trusting relationships are built through the meeting of needs.

Young people who enter services have a number of immediate needs. They need information about their situation and need to know they are safe. They need to know it is okay to feel sad and angry and that they will be helped to find new ways of expressing those feelings.

People who help youth to meet these and other needs will be the people with whom youth will more likely form attachments. It is through these attachments and trusting relationships that children and youth learn and practice new ways to interact with their peers and adults. Further, Bessel van der Kolk (1996) found that “Secure attachments act as a defense against trauma.” When we assist young people in meeting these most basic needs, we teach important skills that help them manage their lives.

## ■ Premise #7

---

*Youth are best served by staff that believe in and practice teamwork and networking.*

“ Teamwork or partnership among the adults working in the lives of children, youth, and their families is critical for four reasons:

1. Teamwork demonstrates to youth that they are in an environment in which adults treat each other and youth with respect. There are more consistent messages, and everyone is valued. This kind of modeling will increase the likelihood that young people will become involved and invested in the agency program.
2. Partnership supports the expectation that each young person’s unique needs, based on culture, ethnicity, gender, age, physical ability, sexual orientation, etc., will be respected.
3. Youth, especially those living together in care, have varied and intense needs. Therefore, it is unreasonable to expect that one or even a few adults can meet all their needs. Youth can also be counted

upon to help each other and the adults around them. They learn teamwork and networking from and with us.

4. **Teamwork is vital in times of crisis. Unless we know, understand, and practice intervention strategies together, our interventions may create confusion, be ineffective, and result in re-traumatizing the youth in our care.**

**We've all heard of social networking. Professional networking involves communicating, building a support and resource system for you. Networking helps us: (1) be supported as professionals, (2) gain access to educational and practical resources (3) realize we are not alone in our work and (4) compare best practices. Without networking, we limit our access to resources needed to benefit ourselves, the children, youth and families with whom we work.**