IEPs and Effective Program Planning for Students with Traumatic Brain Injury

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- About Matt
- Overview of Tier I, II and III Interventions
- What is different about eligibility for TBI?
- IEP writing for TBI
- Intervention ideas
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Video clip

3 things that are different about TBI, compared to other disabilities

PA Educational Definition of TBI
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Public Law 101-476, includes traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a distinct disability category. TBI is defined as an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term applies to open and closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas such as:
  - Cognition, language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, information processing, speech

What is the same about TBI, compared to other disabilities?
Overview of TIER 1, 2 and 3 Levels of Intervention

Core
Targeted
Intensive

Matt – like many students with a new TBI – started at Tier III and worked backwards in interventions.

Year 1
- Full time assistant
- Monitored in all classes
- Unable to organize
- Inappropriate choices
  - Porn, touching
- Data was easy to take

Matt

Year 2
- Worked hard to “get rid” of assistant
- Depressed
  - Yet smiled and laughed until explosion
- Hated SPED Teacher
- Refused classroom

Year 3
- Current “arrangement with SPED teacher” and plans for future
- Still laughs in response to pain and discomfort
- Church camp leader
  - Plans to attend a small college in music
- Relies on many overt cues from others to perform socially in school
So what’s different about TBI?
- May start on Tier III
- Problems tend to be more exaggerated
- More extreme discrepancies among skills
- More uneven and unpredictable progress
- The condition could improve to pre-injury state
- Previously learned material may be gone or need to be relearned

TBI is likely to cause problems with...
- Impulse control/Judgment
- Organization
- Skill integration
- Generalization
- Abstract reasoning
- Social judgment

Eligibility

Document that student has a disabling condition:
- Evaluate areas not typically targeted
  - Judgment, planning, etc.
- What do we know about his pre-injury performance?
- Pre vs. Post-injury performance is the basis for documenting TBI as the cause of disability
- Medical documentation

Impact of TBI on current performance
- Is there a need for specially designed instruction?
- Don’t forget adaptive behavior!

The student meets all three of the following criteria:
1. The student has an acquired injury to the brain, caused by an external physical force
2. The student’s condition is permanent or expected to last for more than 60 calendar days
3. The student’s injury results in an impairment of one or more of the following areas:
- Communication;
- Behavior;
- Cognition, memory, attention, abstract thinking, judgment, problem solving, reasoning, and/or information processing;
- Sensory, perceptual, motor and/or physical abilities

Why not just identify with LD, OHI, VI, etc....?
- Other eligibilities have less variability over time and setting
- Knowledge of TBI can become lost over time, but effects are not lost
  - Need for higher functioning may occur after student is no longer eligible under another eligibility
  - Consequences of TBI may not be recognized as disabilities (may be considered idiosyncratic quirks)

The Right Category Matters!
- Increases understanding
- Instructional strategies and behavior management strategies differ
- Increased awareness of TBI and need for resources
- Dollars flow through special education eligibilities via formulas that are established by the state

Writing the IEP

What is in the Individual Education Program?
- Agreement between local school district and the parents of a student who is eligible for SPED services
- Summarizes present levels of academic and functional performance of a student
- Has annual goals
- Indicates the amount of time a student will attend regular classes, be away from non-disabled students, etc.
- Accommodations the student may need to participate in classes and statewide assessments
- Plans for transition services (for students 16 and older)
- Dates and location of services to be offered, related services that will be offered to the student and supports for school personnel

IEP Process: Making it Work
- Gather information from:
  - Parents
  - Teachers
  - Interview the student !!!
- Observe the student
- Don’t forget adaptive behavior!
Make the IEP Student Centered

- Find out student’s:
  - Goals Hopes Dreams
  - Obstacles
  - Strategies
  - Action Plan

Running the Meeting

- Facilitate a problem solving process:
  - Letting FORMS run the meeting...
    - Takes the focus off the student
    - Leads to “SPED speak”
  - Keep meeting to 1 hour or less
  - Set expectation of participation
  - Make it visual (big helps too)
    - Use charts & markers

Overcoming Obstacles

- Start with student’s input or dreams
- Pick one or two obstacles to overcome
- Use an action plan to address the obstacles
- The targets for the action plan become the goals for the IEP

Facilitator Skills

- Find points of agreement
- Restate or refrain
- Paraphrasing
- Agree to disagree – but find points of commonality so you can move forward
  - Refine and define

Who should be at an IEP meeting for a student with TBI?

- Student!
- Parent/guardian
- Case manager (usually the special education teacher)
- Classroom teacher
- District representative
- Person knowledgeable about TBI
- Person able to interpret evaluation data

Professionals to Include

- School psychologist
- Physical therapist
- Occupational therapist
- Speech pathologist
- Person with expertise in TBI (consultant)
- Vision specialist
- Deaf/hard of hearing specialist
- School nurse
First IEP Meeting!
- Between 4-6 IEP meetings a year, due to changing needs
- Depending on the time since the injury
- Schedule the next 2 meetings at this time

Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance
- Include information on the student’s academic, social, behavioral, sensory, communication, mobility, and medical issues, such as headaches or fatigue.
- Adaptive ability results
- Focus on student strengths and effective strategies
- Describe what helps the student learn
- What limits or interferes with the student’s learning
- Include objective data from evaluations
- Indicate how the disability affects ability to progress in the general education curriculum

Program needs for students with TBI
- Students with TBI tend to have needs that cross several subject areas
- IEP goals must address issues across several classes or settings
- Teach same skills in multiple settings

Behavior issues to consider in IEP
- Students with TBI sometimes have:
  - low frustration tolerance
  - difficulty understanding social cues
  - fatigue
  - impulsivity
  - confabulation
- Identification of pre-injury status is needed!
- FBA is needed

Behavior
- Tantrums
- Outbursts
- Inappropriate language
- Violence
- Withdrawal

Behavior interventions to consider
- Coaching to assist with misperceptions
- Give clear guidelines for tasks
  - Help student determine own goals for:
    - When to start
    - What to do
    - How much to do
    - What finished looks like
    - What to do next
Social-Emotional Issues to Consider in IEP Planning
- Consider the student’s ability to
  - Link their behavior to consequences
  - Understand their new set of abilities
- The impact of depression
- Social isolation

Physical issues to consider in IEP Planning
- Protocol/training
  - Feeding
  - Safety
  - Mobility
  - Seizure
  - Fatigue
  - Latex protocol

Cognitive Issues to Consider in IEP Planning
- Students may respond to cognitive challenges with behavior outbursts or withdrawal
- Students may insist on using old strategies that were successful prior to the accident
- Another reason for multiple IEP meetings

More Cognitive Issues
- Orientation to place and time reduced
- Overload/breakdown of comprehension
  - Especially when fatigued
  - Results in irritability, tears, tantrums
- Initiation/motivation
- Perseveration
- Reduced rate of
  - processing
  - performance

Memory
- Long term
- Short term
- Prospective
- Working memory

Memory Interventions
- AT device
  - Planner
  - PDA
  - Cell phone alarm
  - Notes
  - Visual reminders
  - Picture schedules
- Coaching/consultation
Concrete Thinking

Difficulty with abstraction, synthesis, inference, etc.

Concrete Thinking Strategies

- Prompts and reminders
- Coaching
- Structured teaching
- Social
  - Goal Plan Do Review
  - Comic strip conversations adapted for review
  - Friendship groups (facilitated)

Slow Processing Speed

Processing Speed Strategies

- Give more time to complete tasks
- Continue to request school and household tasks
- In school
  - Note-taker
  - Books on MP3 or CD
  - Audio-assisted reading
  - Assistive technology programs to help with production of written language

Planning Challenges

- Impacts
- Behavior
- Goal setting
- Ability to complete tasks
  - Homework
  - Getting to places on time
- Daily living skills!

Planning Interventions

- State the obvious...
  - it may not be as clear to the student
- Routines
- Scripts
- Picture schedules
- Calendar to plan long-range projects with student
  - Coach through every step
- Checklists or cue cards
  - steps for completing a task
- Goal-setting and planning sheets
  - organize the checklists into a small notebook for easy reference
- With number of steps in a task
- Number of items to be completed
Difficulty Initiating (starting)
- Conversations
  - Appropriate
  - Social nuances
- Tasks
  - Jobs
  - Getting out of bed

Initiation Interventions
- Goal
- Plan
- Do
- Review
- Coach the student to do tasks appropriately in multiple settings

Communication Issues to Consider in IEP Planning
Include...
- Social use of language
  - Turn taking in conversation
  - Not interrupting others
  - Tracking a conversation
  - Other practical language skills
  - As well as speech production

Regular or Extended Assessment?
- Consider the student’s ability to
  - Work without fatigue
  - Manage pain
  - Use memory
- Process information
  - How quickly the student thinks, speaks and performs tasks
- Physically manage materials
- Use vision
- Structure their thoughts around problems

Assistive Technology
- Because of difficulties transferring learning from one setting to another and potential memory deficits, students with TBI may need SDI to learn to use assistive technology devices in multiple settings.

Measurable Annual Goals
State goals as an increase in positive behaviors, rather than the elimination of a negative behavior
Goals that go beyond specific academic areas

**Remember:**
- Keep goals functionally oriented and outcome-based
- Base goals on the student strengths paired with student need
- Look for changes in any of the areas
- IEP may need to be rewritten every 2-4 months to meet changing needs of student

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Sample IEP Goals

- **Communication**
  - Given a topic, Steven will take 4 turns in a conversation before changing the topic 3 out of 4 trials across 3 settings: in speech therapy, in the classroom and in the hallway.
  - Sam will choose an activity and show a picture of that activity to another student as an invitation to play.

- **Behavior**
  - Jenny will remove herself from a confrontation with a classmate by going to the counselor’s office and choosing an activity from her cool down box – 2 out of 3 opportunities during lunch/recess.

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Sample IEP Goals

- **Memory**
  - After learning 4 memory techniques, Sarah will chose one and use it to recall the names of 5 friends 3 times each week.
  - To be better prepared for homework, Sam will record class assignments in a planner and review it at the end of the day with Mr. Green.

- **Attention**
  - Shelly will self-advocate by requesting the elimination of sources of distraction during instruction in an appropriate way 4 out of 5 times two consecutive days.

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Sample Goals

- **Abstract thinking**
  - Given a form to complete, Suzy will make a reasonable inference about a paragraph she has read 4 out of 5 times for 6 weeks in a row.
  - After listening to a paragraph from different content areas, Ginger will accurately predict what might happen next 3 out of 5 times for 5 consecutive days.

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Sample Goals

- **Judgment**
  - With guidance Mary will use a matrix of choices to determine the best option for herself when deciding between 3 possibilities.
  - Mary will meet with Ms. Stand to discuss consequences of 1 choice she plans to make prior to lunch 3/5 days each week.

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Even More Sample Goals

- **Problem solving**
  - Sandy will generate 4 solutions to a problem she has had at recess and choose a solution to try the next recess 3 out of 5 days each week.
  - After choosing a problem, Sid will meet with his mentor to determine ways to solve the problem.

- **Reasoning**
  - Bentley will create a shopping list using the amount of money he has budgeted.
  - With guidance, Bentley will use a shopping list he has created to purchase needed items for the week at the store.
More and More Sample Goals

- Perceptual Motor
  - Taylor will use visual cues to find her way from class to class independently 4 out of 5 classes for 3 consecutive days.
  - Taylor will be accompanied by an assistant between classes (accommodation).

The never ending Sample Goals

- Information processing
  - After listening to a story, Sandy will retell with pauses of less than 30 seconds, 3 times each week.

- Sensory
  - When crossing the street with assistance, Steve will turn his head to use his right eye to scan the left side of his body to keep his body safe.

The FINAL Sample Goals

- Physical Abilities
  - Given a tangible cue, Dakota will navigate the hall independently in his wheelchair to the destination indicated by the cue.
  - Karla will spend 30 minutes each day in her stander.

Program Planning

Placement

- Students regain skills best with
  - familiarity of the classroom
  - known teachers
  - known peers
  - routines
  - behavioral and cognitive supports needed
  - For most children, rehabilitation takes place in school

Cautions about Placement

- Home tutoring
  - Behavioral problems may increase because
  - Family members not trained to handle
  - The student may fall farther behind academically
  - Student may become anxious about returning to school

- Temporary placement in a special education class can provide
  - Inappropriate modeling for students who are trying to regain social skills
  - Emotional difficulty for student and family

Adapted from Ylvisaker Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitation: Children and Adolescents, 2nd ed., Appendix 17-1
Program planning

- Keep with peers as much as possible
- Why not SPED classroom?
- Include student
- Give student control over as much as possible

SDI and TBI

- cognition
- language
- memory
- attention
- reasoning
- abstract thinking
- judgment
- planning
- problem-solving
- sensory
- perceptual motor abilities
- psychosocial behavior
- physical functions
- information processing
- speech

New Learning is HARD

- Learning requires motivation and repetition
- Create motivation by including student

Unintended Side Effects of Poorly Planned Interventions

Q & A

Plus, Evaluation!