



LITERATURE SUMMARY

BUILDING SOFT SKILLS

Collaboration & Culturally Responsive Practices



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Literature Summary

Reference:

Kazemi, E., Shapiro, M., & Kavner, A. (2015). Predictors of intention turnover in behavior technicians working with individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Highlights:

Includes key predictors of BT Turnover and related healthcare fields

Turnover brings a lot of challenges to everyone involved when an employee voluntarily leaves a position. Service quality is impacted, it can damage the therapeutic relationship, and can compromise company infrastructure. What really happens when a trained employee leaves a position? When employees leave, they take with them critical information they acquired over time about the work position, the company, and the client. Untrained and often novice new employees are commonly the replacement and this can leave expanded responsibilities on other employees and cause trust concerns for the families. Turnover can also lower remaining employees' morale, increase the workload, and discourage others from applying to open positions. This disruption across all people involved can negatively impact the family life as well as lead to lack of progress for the individual receiving care. While there is a lot of literature out there discussing the possible negative impacts of turnover in the healthcare field, this article focuses on the direct issues related to behavior technicians (BTs) working with individuals with autism and the reasons they may leave a position. The researchers found that the main reasons BTs are leaving positions so often was typically due to dissatisfaction with training for their position, not enough supervision, pay, and other general aspects of the positions such as opportunities for advancement, praise, and recognition.

A survey was developed that focused on questions related to turnover and was sent to ABA agencies throughout the Los Angeles region and was also posted at various ASD events (e.g., Autism Walk). Of the original sample that showed interest in the survey, 66% completed it which narrowed the total to 96 participants. The majority of the sample were women, with not children, and between ages 21-25. The majority held an undergraduate degree and had been working with their current company for one year or less and had a caseload between 20-39 hours per week. They found that the best predictors for turnover were dissatisfaction with initial training, ongoing supervision, and lack of opportunity and recognition. Of the 96 participants in the survey, 38% reported that they were highly or somewhat likely to leave their position.

Of those employees who self-reported the intent to turnover, 60% of the individuals actually left within a year. Working with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) can be challenging due to impairments in communication and reciprocal social



interactions and restricted interests, parents and teachers can be extremely stressed, and with these challenges, BTs still can find themselves in these challenging environments up to 40 hours per week with not a lot of supervision and often feel they are not appreciated. Higher levels of supervision from highly qualified supervisors is required however, the lack of supervision and training is one of the biggest grievances coming from BTs. Future directions to improve BT turnover should look at better initial training, improving supervision methods such as ongoing assessment of performance and specific skills training for BTs, increased emotional support methods, and look more closely at the qualifications and quality of supervisors' interactions.