Description of Course Assignment

Report of Behavioral Program

Assignment Description

You will have the opportunity to design a behavioral program for a problem behavior in need of being changed. Specifically, you will: (a) describe the problem behavior to be addressed, (b) access the professional/applied literature pertinent to the behavior problem, (c) design a behavioral change program, with relevant program components described and explained, and (d) produce a written description of the plan.

Specification of the Assignment

The Behavioral Program will consist of the following sections. Each section should address the elements described below.

Problem behavior. This section should describe the problem of the individual for whom the program is being planned. A brief description of the person’s general ways of responding makes it difficult for the individual to lead a satisfying, productive life-- either at home, work, or school. The description should be written in layman’s terms, and need not exceed a page in length. The problem can be fairly specific, or it can be one that is rather generalized, showing up across a number of settings.

Background to the problem. This section should be broken up into 2 sub-areas. The first should deal with the kinds of factors that you believe are operating in the person’s life that contribute to his or her problem. These factors should be explained. For example, the person might be an 8 year old boy whose parents were recently divorced. He might have experienced a major shift in child-rearing experiences and marked changes in his family life, consisting of increased stress, inconsistency in parental demands, decreased feelings of stability and security, etc. This sub-area need not exceed a page or two.

The second subpart should present a brief discussion of the problem from the point of view of the scholarly literature. Most problems of behavior have been addressed in the applied professional literature. They either discuss interventions that have been empirically documented to be successful in treating certain problems, or they itemize and discuss factors to consider in addressing problems in practice. These articles are typically very valuable in guiding you in your plans. This sub-section need not exceed 3-5 pages.
I would expect that you should be able to find four to six articles on the behavior for which you will be designing a program. Remember that there may be articles on a number of related issues to the problem, or the intervention you design. These articles may address things like: (a) the nature of the problem, (b) traits, conditions, or characteristics associated with your client’s demographics, (c) issues related to treatment, or (d) intervention designs. Any, or all, of these would be acceptable.

Behaviors to be addressed. This section should list the problem behaviors in need of being addressed. These behaviors should be well-specified. They should be expressed as operants, and be observable and measurable. It is acceptable and encouraged for you to present these behaviors in tabular form. While this section will be quite brief, usually consisting only of two to five behaviors, it is important for you to reflect on the degree to which these behaviors address directly the problem as described in section one. It is very important that the behaviors you have chosen for change reduce, or ameliorate, the problem as you presented it in section one.

Behavior change procedures to be implemented. In this section, identify and describe the techniques and/or procedures you used to change the target behaviors described above. Each behavioral procedure should be carefully and accurately explained in terms of its intended effect on behavior and how it was executed. By the way, if you use a procedure that has a name (e.g. DRI), make certain to write it out (e.g. Differential Reinforcement of Incompatible Behavior), and describe the procedure in general, and how it was specifically used in your program.

Rationale for the use of procedures. This section may be combined with the section above. In it, you should discuss the reasons you elected to use the techniques, principles, or procedures (TTP’s) you chose to change the target behaviors. If there were other TTP’s you could have used, identify what they may have been, and why you decided not to use them. This is a very important section because it will allow you to develop judgments about the value of some TTP’s for some behaviors and not others. You will find that this contrast helps you distinguish the relative value of different TTP’s for various problems.

Observation and recording procedures. In this section, you should identify and describe the various methods of observation and recording you are going to use for each of the behaviors you specified above. Be certain to include any recording sheets that you design, and explain why you designed them the way you did, and what kind of information they yielded. This latter element is important because it will help you see that some data collection methods are more powerful than others. Sometimes there is more than one recording procedure you can use to measure a behavior. Identify any of the other data collection methods you considered using to record the behavior, and why you elected not to employ them. This will reveal to you why some of the advantages and disadvantages of recording procedures.
One additonal note: Students sometimes inadvertently use the wrong recording procedure to measure behavior. That is, they may use a frequency recording procedure when the appropriate behavioral dimension to measure was latency. Be careful of this. It is a common (but costly) mistake.

Description of Program Implementation. Provide a brief description of how the program unfolded. That is, describe the program’s procedure, consisting of: (a) how long it lasted, (b) who did what to whom and when, (c) the conditions and circumstances necessary for program modification, and (d) plans for maintenance and generalization. This section should be described clearly enough for the reader to be able to put the program into effect and observe the behavior change. Make certain to specify how program success was defined.

Results. This section should identify briefly how the behavior changed, when it is graphed. Simply include a graph that looks like the one below to show behavioral change.