

**Raymond A. Kent School of Social Work/University of Louisville**  
**Positive Behavior Support (PBS) Model in Head Start**

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**BACKGROUND:** The need for prevention, early identification, and effective treatment for young children with challenging behavior is vital in Head Start as well as other early childhood programs. Researchers at the Kent School of Social Work and Bellermino University, with consultation support from Hill Walker and Mike Nelson, have been developing, implementing, and pilot testing a PBS model within the Jefferson County (Louisville) Head Start/Early Head Start program since August 2003. Researchers and Head Start administrators continue to pursue external funding to further refine the PBS model and take it to scale within JCPS Head Start and beyond. The overall purpose of this project is to improve the school readiness skills of children at risk of school failure due to their family's low socioeconomic status. During the next several years, researchers will collaborate with leaders in Kentucky who coordinate similar efforts (e.g., Kentucky Initiative or Social Skills and Emotional Development, the Devereux Early Childhood Initiative, and Kentucky Healthy Start in Child Care) as well as nationally recognized experts in PBS to refine the model and share information regarding program conceptualization, instrumentation, evaluation, training, and barriers to implementation effectiveness.

**METHODOLOGY:**

- The Positive Behavior Support model in Head Start that includes three tiers of prevention and intervention: primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention. The model is a cohesive program based on empirical support in the literature and is consistent with the goals and processes of Head Start.
- This PBS model addresses professional development, community coordination, and the complexity of intervening with social issues associated with poverty. Most importantly, it incorporates best practices from the literature regarding prevention, early identification, and effective treatment of young children with challenging behavior.

**KEY FINDINGS:**

- During the 2003-2004 school year, the effectiveness and social validity of the primary prevention component of the intervention was evaluated and the results were encouraging.
- We are currently evaluating whether children who are participating in the program have more advanced school readiness skills than those who attend Head Start but are not participation in the intervention.
- During the 2005-2006 school year, we are proposing a single subject design that would determine the relative effectiveness of the secondary prevention intervention at improving the percentage of time children are academically engaged and reduce disruptive behaviors within the classroom.

**USEFULNESS TO CABINET:** Our program targets young children who are at risk not only school failure, but a host of other negative long term outcomes, including delinquency and dependency on welfare programs. This early identification and prevention program will likely prevent children and families from entering the child welfare system and definitely provides additional services to those already served by CHFS. This is an important resource for cabinet workers who know children in Head Start in JCPS to know about as they are able to recommend children for services.

