

## **Research-based intervention teaching organization, time management and planning (OTMP) skills: Child-focused strategies**

*This supplemental handout provides a summary of strategies used in child skills training interventions for executive functioning which have been tested and found to be effective for children and teens with ADHD. It also provides guidance on how to find a treatment provider and how to effectively collaborate with schools.*

Research has repeatedly found that effective interventions for children with ADHD are behaviorally based. Although research evidence initially showed that individual therapy with a child with ADHD was not effective, over the past 20 years, numerous child skills training interventions have been developed to improve child organization, time management and planning (OTMP) skills, which are the aspects of executive functioning most linked with children's grades (Langberg, et al, 2013). These efforts have been based in clinic and school settings and have targeted students in upper elementary school through high school. At this point, there is strong research evidence to support the effectiveness of organizational skills training programs in reducing OTMP deficits and homework problems and some evidence to indicate these interventions may improve academic performance (Evans, et al, 2014, Evans, et al, 2018). The interventions that have been tested and found to work are all behavioral, child skills training interventions with adult provided implementation supports.

Treatment approaches come from research, clinicians who publish their ideas, and individuals who "coach". Those interventions that come from research have been tested and found to be effective and therefore are the ones we focus on here. Interventions developed by clinicians and coaches outside of research may be effective but have not been tested, so it is not possible to know for sure how effective they are. Therefore, our focus here will be on the interventions that have been tested and found to be effective in a research trial.

Three main child-skills training programs that focus on OTMP skills deficits have been tested in randomized, controlled research trial (RCT):

- Organizational Skills Training (OST) – Clinic-Based for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades (Abikoff, et al, 2013), currently conducting a school-based RCT of OST
- Homework Organization and Planning Skills (HOPS) – School-based for 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade (Langberg, et al, 2017)
- Supporting Teens' Autonomy Daily (STAND) – Clinic-based for ages 11-15 (Sibley, et al., 2016)

An additional child-skills training program that has been tested in an RCT and found to be effective is the Challenging Horizons Program (CHP, Evans, et al, 2016). CHOP focuses on child skills training more broadly and includes OTMP skills training as one skills training component.

### **Organizational Skills Training (OST)**

Organizational skills Training (OST, Abikoff, et al, 2013; Gallagher, et al, 2014; Gallagher, et al, 2018) is a clinic-based intervention for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades with ADHD and OTMP skills deficits. In its research tested form, it includes 20 individual sessions twice a week for ten weeks. It was tested and found to be effective for students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Specifically, it improved children's OTMP skills deficits, their homework performance, and their grades, and also reduced parent reported conflict with their child. Importantly, these improvements lasted into the following school year when children's skills were rated by teachers who did not take part in the intervention. OST is informed by the assumption that children with ADHD have organizational skills deficits, can learn skills but do not use them effectively, and need repeated practice to remember the skills they learned and use them in life.

OST has four areas where it teaches children skills:

- Tracking assignments – writing things down to remember them (e.g., Daily Assignment Record, Test & Assignment Calendar)
- Materials management – organizing and keeping track of your things, including getting them to and from school effectively (e.g., an Accordion binder with a for parents & for teacher sections, a backpack checklist, space organization strategies, “Ready-to-Go”)
- Time management – Managing your time effectively so you can hold onto your free time (e.g., “Time Detective”, Time Planning Conference for homework)
- Planning for short and long-term projects, as well as to meet other goals (e.g., planning conference)

OST begins with an initial session that focuses on engaging children and framing the problem as situational and controllable by asking them to help “Beat the Glitches” (“Go-Ahead-Forget-it Glitch”, “Go-Ahead-Lose-It Glitch”, “Time Bandit”, and “Go-Ahead-Don’t-Plan Glitch”) by building up their “Mastermind.” This analogy compares the brain to a computer, using humor by describing the difficulties as a set of mischievous glitches that like to see kids mess-up, and asks them to work as a team with the therapist and their parents and teachers to help control the glitches and keep them from getting them.

OST ends with a session focused on helping children plan for how they will maintain their gains. Children reflect on what they are doing differently and make a plan for how they will keep doing this. They also collaborate in creating an OTMP Survival Guide to refer to “when the glitches start getting them again.”

OST uses a behaviorally based skills building approach to teaching students these skills. OST also includes a focus on:

- Setting children up for success by making sure that children master using these skills during in session practice before asking children to use the skills between sessions
- Asking adults to reinforce children's skills practice

- Tailoring the organizational system to the school’s organizational demands and the child’s individual pattern of strengths and challenges
- Explicitly teaching children to use these skills in different real-life settings
- Helping children develop and put in place a plan for keeping their skills use going after the end of the intervention

### **Homework, Organization, and Planning Skills (HOPS)**

The Homework, Organization and Planning Skills (HOPS; Langberg, et al, 2018; Langberg, 2014; Langberg, 2022) program is a school-based intervention targeting OTMP skills to improve grades. It was tested and found to be effective for students in 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The research tested form included 16 20-minute individual therapy sessions with students; the first 11 sessions are twice weekly, and the final 5 sessions are weekly. HOPS was found effective in improving students’ homework performance and OTMP with large effect sizes by parent report and medium effect sizes by teacher report.

HOPS teaches students skills for:

- organizing their materials
- establishing a homework management system
- planning and studying for tests
- completing long-term projects
- using after-school time efficiently

HOPS strategies include verbal instruction, modeling, rehearsal, prompting, shaping, and contingency management. Further, HOPS includes parent consultation based upon social learning theory to foster generalization and maintenance of strategy use after the intervention has ended.

The HOPS intervention includes a monitoring and reward (point) system that provides students with point of performance feedback and contingencies for engaging in organization and planning behaviors. The school partner completes checklists to evaluate the student’s use of OTMP skills at every intervention session. Students receive points for each criterion they meet on these checklists. Students accumulate points and trade them in for rewards. As they are successful, students also have the opportunity to receive naturally available reinforcers for engaging in these behaviors (e.g. parent praise and improved grades). Gradually, these naturally available rewards serve to maintain students’ use of organization and planning behaviors. Further, the monitoring and reward system is then transferred to parents who continue to provide rewards as necessary.

### **Supporting Teens’ Autonomy Daily (STAND)**

Supporting Teens' Autonomy Daily (STAND, Sibley, et al., 2016; Sibley, 2017) is a school-based intervention targeting OTMP skills to improve grades. In its research-tested form it includes 10 parent-child/teen 50 minutes long sessions for students aged 11 to 15 which are scheduled once a week. The child/teen and a parent/caregiver attend each session for the entire session. STAND was found effective in improving OTMP skills by both parent and teacher report, as well as observed on-task behavior during homework time and reduced parental stress.

STAND treatment focuses on:

- Sharing skills with the parent and teen that have helped past families feel more in balance
- Use motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2013) to help parents and teens figure out what is important to them and what kind of family member they want to be and affirm their strengths as they work on growing

STAND has a focus on helping parents identify their own change goals, such as:

- finding ways to motivate their adolescent
- reducing reminders during homework time
- increasing accountability for homework completion
- consistently monitoring teen after school) and revisiting progress on these goals during each session.

The STAND intervention begins by introducing families to STAND, including case conceptualization and feedback on assessment results. It helps families examine discrepancies between parent values and current parenting patterns. Session 2 then focuses on identifying areas for change and agree on treatment goals.

Parents and children/teens are then asked to select modular skills training components by choosing 4 of the following 7 possible areas of skill training:

- 1) recording homework daily
- 2) creating a homework contract
- 3) organizing school materials
- 4) prioritizing and managing time out of school
- 5) note-taking in class
- 6) preparing for tests and quizzes
- 7) troubleshooting problems at home

The following four sessions each focus on skill building for each of the four skills selected. The final sessions of the program focus on school collaboration, creating a routine for implementation of new skills, training on developing and modifying home contracts, and then reviewing progress and developing next steps.

The 4 skills training sessions of the STAND program focus on the following strategies:

- In session skills training strategies:
  - The skill is introduced
  - A plan for applying the skill is devised
  - A parent-teen contract is created to detail contingencies associated with appropriate and consistent skill use during the week
- Use motivational interviewing (MI) in a blended manner to increase the family's openness to trying a new strategy and empower lasting changes at home
- Contract - includes parents' detail of a monitoring plan to hold teens accountable for consistent skill use
- Review the past weeks' skill use and contract implementation
- Engage the family in MI to consider whether they will continue skill use and monitoring

### **Challenging Horizon's Program (CHP)**

In addition to these three programs that focus on OTMP skills training program, the Challenging Horizons Program (CHP, Evans, et al, 2016) focuses on OTMP skills training as one piece of the skills training that is done in that program. The HOPs program was developed out of the OTMP skills training portion of the Challenging Horizons Program. CHP is an after school tutoring intervention which is administered twice weekly throughout the school year.

### **Finding a Treatment Provider to Provide these Interventions**

When you are looking for a provider to do these interventions, you want to find a provider who describes the type of interventions they use as 'behavioral' and who has an expertise in working with children and teens with ADHD. You should contact your insurance company for their provider list if you want this to be covered by insurance. Other good sources of therapist recommendations are your child's school and other parents. Even if a therapist does not take insurance, you can file for reimbursement of some of the visit cost from your insurance company. Because these interventions are newer, providers may not be familiar with the specific interventions. You can speak with a provider about implementing a particular intervention for your child. Each of these interventions has a published treatment manual, so the provider can find out how to implement them if they are not familiar with them. As long as the provider has good behavioral intervention skills, the provider should be able to effectively implement these interventions with the assistance of the manual.

### **Collaborating with Your Child's School**

When your child is receiving any of these interventions, learning will be improved if the use of the skills that are being learned is reinforced both at home and at school. Collaborating positively with your child's school and letting your child/teen's teachers know what skills they

are learning will help their teachers prompt, notice and praise their practice at school. Setting up a home-school note where the teacher reports on their skills use at school and you as a parent get the report about what happened so you can reward skills practice at school is an effective strategy to increase skills practice in the school setting.

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