

CHAPTER 5

Implementation Planning

WHAT IS IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING?

Implementation planning is a form of implementation support that involves meeting with an implementer to increase his or her knowledge of how to deliver each step of an intervention and identify potential barriers to ongoing implementation (Box 5.1). Implementation planning includes two phases: (1) action planning, which involves planning the logistics of implementation; and (2) coping planning, which involves identifying barriers to implemen-

BOX 5.1. Implementation Planning Snapshot



Who?

All implementers.



What?

A brief meeting to review intervention steps, offer an opportunity for planned adaptation of the intervention, explicitly define the logistics of intervention implementation, as well as identify and problem-solve possible barriers to implementation.



Where?
When?

Complete implementation planning in a private space immediately after initially introducing a new intervention to an implementer, and before training.



Why?

Implementation planning increases implementer clarity about intervention steps, allows for adaptations to be made systematically to increase contextual fit, and proactively acknowledges and addresses the implementer's perceived barriers to implementation.

tation and developing strategies to overcome those barriers (see Figure 5.1). For the first step in action planning, you and the implementer review each intervention step and discuss if any adaptations are needed to increase the likelihood that it will be implemented with fidelity. Across human service fields, a majority of interventions are adapted when used in practice (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Ringwalt et al., 2003). Implementation planning provides a process for systematically considering adaptations, accepting those that are not likely to decrease the effectiveness of the intervention, and documenting the adaptations so that the implementation of the adapted intervention can be evaluated.

Once any needed adaptations have been made, implementation planning involves discussing each intervention step and specifying *when, how often, for how long, and where* it will be implemented. The last step in planning implementation logistics involves identifying any resources that will be needed to implement each intervention step, who is responsible for obtaining each resource, and by when he or she will obtain it.

With action planning completed, coping planning begins. During coping planning, the implementer identifies the barriers he or she believes are most likely to arise and impede his or her implementation of the intervention. Once the implementer has identified up to four possible barriers, you and the implementer brainstorm ways to maintain intervention implementation in the presence of each of these barriers.

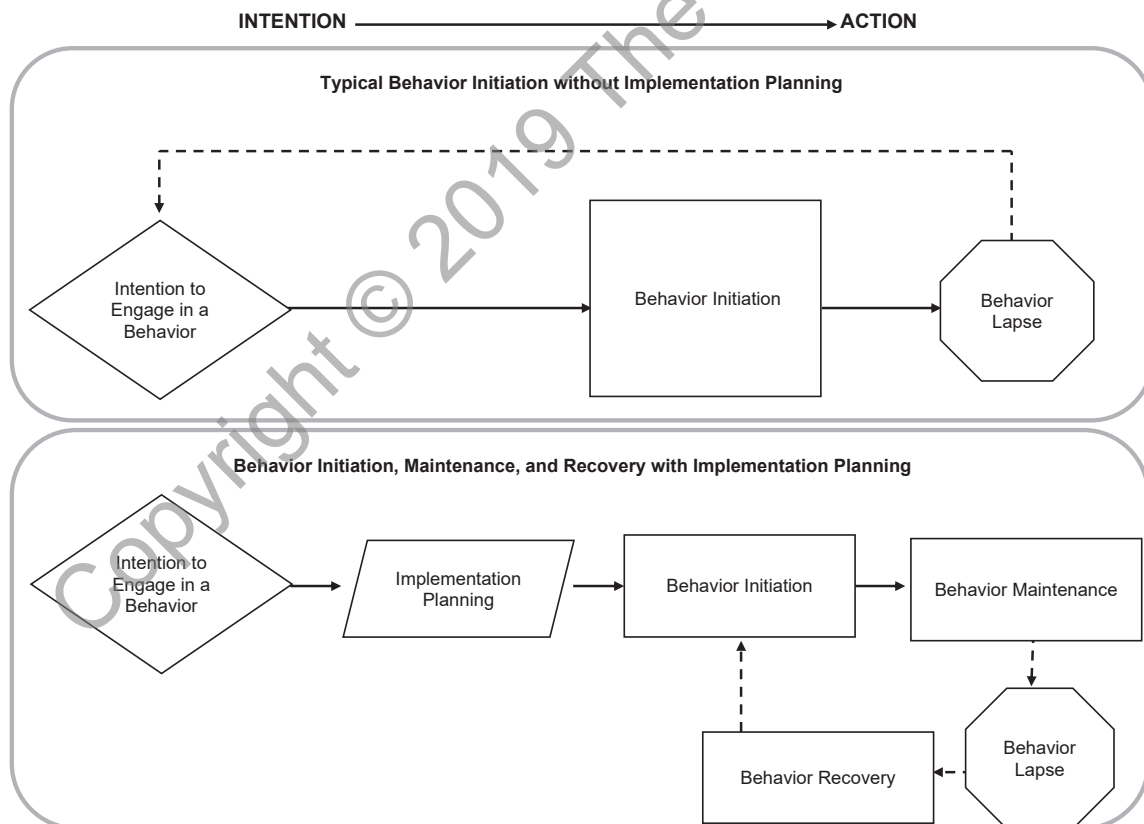


FIGURE 5.1. Behavior initiation with and without implementation planning.

RESEARCH ON IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Implementation planning has been found to be effective in both school and home settings to address a range of behavioral and academic concerns (Collier-Meek, Sanetti, et al., 2018; Fallon et al., 2016; Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015; Sanetti et al., 2015; Sanetti, Collier-Meek, Long, Kim, & Kratochwill, 2014; Sanetti, Williamson, Long, & Kratochwill, 2018). More specifically, several studies have demonstrated that implementation planning can effectively increase general education teachers' adherence and quality when implementing behavior support plans (Sanetti et al., 2014, 2015) and classroom management plans (Collier-Meek, Sanetti, et al., 2018; Sanetti & Collier-Meek, 2015; Sanetti et al., 2018). It also effectively increased special education teachers' implementation of a schoolwide behavior plan in an alternative school setting (Long, Sanetti, Lark, & Connolly, 2018) and parents' implementation of a home-based behavioral intervention (Fallon et al., 2016). In terms of academics, implementation planning effectively increased implementation of a math fluency intervention (Byron & Sanetti, 2018; Altschaeffl & Kratochwill, 2016). These studies echo the results of decades of research in health psychology and suggest that logistical planning and barrier identification facilitate implementers' movement from having an intention to implement to maintaining implementation (e.g., Schwarzer, 2008; Scholz, Schüz, Ziegelmann, Lippke, & Schwarzer, 2008; Sniehotta, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005).

HOW DOES IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING WORK?

Implementation planning is based on the health action process approach (HAPA; Schwarzer, 1992, 2008), an empirically supported theory of adult behavior change that suggests that there are two stages to engaging in a new behavior. First, the individual has to develop an intention to change his or her behavior. In terms of implementing interventions, this typically requires the implementer to believe that (1) there is an issue that requires intervention, (2) he or she is capable of intervening, and (3) intervention implementation is likely to help. Second, the individual has to actually act on his or her intention and engage in the new behavior, and then maintain that behavior across time. Left to our own devices, the shift from the first stage to the second stage is where most of us get tripped up. The detailed logistical planning and barrier identification involved in implementation planning have been found to help people successfully move from having an intention to change their behavior to actually engaging in the new behavior (Schwarzer, 1992, 2008).

WHAT IMPLEMENTERS WILL BENEFIT FROM IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING?

Implementation planning can benefit any implementer. Given its focus, we recommend that you use implementation planning with all implementers when you introduce a new intervention. Because you and the implementer may adapt the intervention during this process, it is most efficient to complete implementation planning before embarking on direct

training or other implementation support strategies. For interventions that are to be implemented across contexts or implementers (e.g., homeroom teachers, specialist teachers), it is most time efficient to complete implementation planning with all implementers present. This format will better equip you to adapt the intervention to fit in each of the contexts, and decrease barriers that may be unique to specific implementers or contexts. The combination of implementation planning and direct training will set up the implementers for successful implementation, which will save you time and energy in supporting them across time.

Implementation planning can also be used to increase implementation. If you have provided training to an implementer, but intervention fidelity data suggest that he or she is struggling to implement the intervention consistently across time, implementation planning can be an effective way to review the intervention plan, make adaptations to the plan that may increase feasibility, and problem-solve barriers to implementation.

GETTING READY FOR IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

Implementation planning is a conversation-based implementation support strategy that requires some preparation ahead of time to allow for a smooth and productive session with the implementer. Getting ready to deliver implementation planning involves three steps, outlined in Box 5.2 and described below.

Step 1: Review the Intervention and Current Data

To prepare for implementation planning, review the intervention and current data, if available. Specifically, review the intervention plan. Once familiar, *break down the intervention plan so that you are able to clearly discuss the discrete steps of the intervention* (sometimes referred to as “components”). We are often asked if there is a “right way” to divide

BOX 5.2. Getting Ready to Deliver Implementation Planning

1. Review the intervention and current data.
 - Familiarize yourself with and break down the intervention plan.
 - If using implementation planning after implementation has already begun:
 - Review intervention goal and, using data, the learner’s current progress.
 - Evaluate intervention fidelity data.
2. Prepare for implementation planning.
 - Read about implementation planning.
 - Prepare the Action and Coping Planning Worksheets.
 - Practice dialogue, as needed, to be comfortable in the meeting.
3. Identify session logistics.
 - Schedule implementation planning session.
 - Reach out to the implementer.
 - Bring implementation planning materials to the session.



an intervention into steps. For some interventions it is pretty clear, but for others, less so. The primary question you want to ask yourself is, “Are there steps that fit together or can be grouped in a logical way?” If so, plan to address those steps together, as a group, rather than in individual pieces.

Your goal is to divide the intervention plan into grouped steps that will help the implementer understand (1) how intervention steps are related to others in the group, (2) how groups of interventions steps are related to one another, and (3) the overall intervention plan. For a behavior support plan, it may be helpful to group intervention steps into antecedent (e.g., establishing and defining a classroom schedule, active supervision), teaching (e.g., teach behavioral expectations, teach problem solving), and consequence (e.g., class-wide group contingencies, positive reinforcement) strategies. For other types of interventions, organize the steps into logical groups to discuss with the implementer. For example, you may divide the intervention steps according to when the steps must be implemented (e.g., all steps delivered at once, different steps provided at separate times) or in relation to the theoretical links between the steps (e.g., if several steps are based on one principle, if intervention steps build on one another).

If implementation planning is being used to proactively adapt an intervention prior to implementation, move on to Step 2 in the next section. If, however, you are using implementation planning to increase an implementer’s intervention fidelity, *review the intervention goal and the learner’s progress* and *review intervention fidelity data* so that you are comfortable describing current patterns in these data sources (e.g., level, trend, variability, relationship between data sources). If possible, make graphs to illustrate this information and thereby provide a rationale for why there is a need for the implementation planning session (see Chapter 4).

Step 2: Prepare for Implementation Planning

To be comfortable delivering this strategy, carefully *read about implementation planning* and familiarize yourself with the strategy steps and talking points (see Appendix 5.1). Confirm your understanding of the purpose of the strategy and each of the steps. To make the session with the implementer as efficient as possible, we recommend that you *prepare the Action and Coping Planning Worksheets* (Appendices 5.2A–5.2D). Make copies of all the worksheets, and then complete the first and second columns of the Action Plan Worksheet, Part A (Appendix 5.2A), by writing the intervention components identified in Step 1. Having this portion filled in already will allow you to focus more of your attention on the implementer’s concerns and needs as opposed to the completion of the worksheet. In addition to these worksheets, prepare any other necessary information or materials (e.g., graphs, reports, written intervention plan). To *practice your dialogue*, review the Implementation Planning Guide (Appendix 5.1), and if applicable, review intervention fidelity and outcome data. This preparation will help you to maximize the strategy session.

Step 3: Identify Session Logistics

Once ready, it is necessary to plan the session logistics. To *schedule implementation planning*, determine how long the meeting will last, when to hold the meeting, and how many

Quick Tip 5.1. Bring Extra Action and Coping Planning Worksheets

To facilitate the meeting process, we highly recommend that you bring a second copy of the intervention plan and the Action and Coping Planning Worksheets so that the implementer can follow along. We have found that doing so helps implementers understand the questions and keeps the meeting moving at a relatively quick pace.

sessions are needed to complete the strategy. Plan to meet for approximately 30 minutes, although some implementation planning sessions may be shorter or longer. Decide who will be involved (e.g., primary implementer, potential collaborators). In some cases, there is more than one person implementing the intervention (e.g., paraprofessionals, school support professionals) or other stakeholders (e.g., case worker, parent) who may be interested in attending. Arrange where you will meet. You will need a quiet space that offers privacy for discussion. Make sure that the time and location are feasible for implementer. *Reach out to the implementer* ahead of the implementation planning session. If you think it would be helpful for the implementer to review any materials prior to the strategy meeting, provide those in advance (e.g., written list of intervention steps, sample intervention materials, research, data). *Bring implementation planning materials* to the session: the Implementation Planning Guide (Appendix 5.1), the written intervention plan, the Action Planning and Coping Planning Worksheets (Appendix 5.2), and, if applicable, graphs of intervention fidelity and learner outcome data.

IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING STEP-BY-STEP

Implementation planning involves reviewing the intervention, adapting intervention steps to the implementation context, and collaboratively developing an implementation plan during a meeting with the implementer. The 11 steps of a typical implementation planning session are listed in Box 5.3. The Implementation Planning Guide (Appendix 5.1) at the end of this chapter includes the key objectives and sample language for each step, as well as space for recording the implementer's responses. This guide can be copied and used for delivering this implementation support in your practice. A description of the steps involved in implementation planning, including key objectives and quick tips for delivery, are provided below.

Step 1: Explain the Purpose of the Session

- Provide an overview of implementation planning.
- Begin implementation planning in an open, supportive manner.

The purpose of this step is to open the implementation planning session in a collaborative manner by previewing the plan for the session, explaining implementation planning, and developing goals for the session. Start by providing a general description of why you are

BOX 5.3. Implementation Planning Steps

1. Explain the purpose of the session.
2. Review the target concern and goal.
3. Review the intervention steps.
4. Modify the intervention steps, if needed.
5. Identify the logistics of each intervention step.
6. Discuss how needed resources may be obtained, if applicable.
7. Summarize the action plan.
8. Identify potential barriers to implementation.
9. Identify potential strategies to address barriers.
10. Summarize coping planning.
11. Review the meeting and thank the implementer.



meeting with the implementer, explaining that you are going to consider the intervention logistics and plan for implementation.

Explain to the implementer that implementation planning consists of two stages. The goal of the first stage is for the consultant and the implementer to look at the intervention steps and plan the details of the intervention. The goal of the second stage is to identify and problem-solve any barriers to implementation. Thus, the overall purpose of implementation planning is to facilitate the definition and adaptation of the intervention so that it fits the implementer's specific context.

Work with the implementer to collaboratively develop goals for the session, as doing so will allow you to target the discussion and ensure that there is a shared vision for the meeting. Goals for implementation planning might include helping the implementer prepare for the implementation or making adaptations to the intervention to ensure that it is contextually appropriate. Use your understanding of the implementation planning strategy to help target the implementer's suggestions for the session goals. Once you've decided on shared goals, briefly explain how implementation planning will help meet these session goals.

Step 2: Review the Target Concern and Goal

- Review the target concern, current data, and intervention goal.
- Describe generally how the intervention can address the learner's issue and support the learner to meet his or her goal.

To set up the discussion of the intervention, briefly review the target concern for the learner, current learner outcome data (if available), and the intervention goal. That is, you may highlight the major concerns and address the current level of progress compared to the intervention goal. This review of the target concern will ensure that the discussion of the intervention through the rest of the implementation planning steps is appropriately contextualized.

Step 3: Review the Intervention Steps

- Show the implementer the list of intervention steps (on Action Plan Worksheet, Part A).
- Discuss if the organization of intervention steps makes sense to the implementer; if not, revise.

This is the first step of action planning, and it consists of reviewing the list of intervention steps with the implementer (see Action Plan Worksheet, Part A, Appendix 5.2A). If the intervention steps have been grouped together, as recommended above, it is important for you to go over how the steps were grouped and the logic behind the grouping, to make sure that the steps are divided in a way that makes sense to the implementer. If the implementer has any questions or suggestions about how the steps have been organized, make revisions to the list of intervention steps at this time. When reviewing the intervention, make sure that what each step requires is clear and, if helpful, briefly describe why each step is important to the outcomes.

Step 4: Modify the Intervention Steps, If Needed

- Ask the implementer if modifications to intervention steps could increase feasibility or contextual fit.
- Keep in mind the empirical and theoretical support for any modifications to intervention steps.

It is important to ensure that the intervention is feasible and contextually appropriate. At this point, ask if the implementer has identified any intervention steps that may need modifications to be appropriate for his or her context or the learner. If modifications are requested, it is important to keep in mind the empirical and theoretical support for each intervention step and to ensure that any revisions follow the same theoretical logic. Have an active discussion that results in an evidence-based intervention that is well suited to the implementer's context. Any modifications that are made should be agreed upon by the consultant and the implementer, and recorded on the Action Plan Worksheet, Part A (Appendix 5.2A).

Step 5: Identify the Logistics of Each Intervention Step

- Discuss how proactively planning logistics of an intervention can help implementation.
- Ask the implementer to identify logistics of implementation and needed resources.
- Record implementer responses regarding intervention logistics on Action Plan Worksheet, Part B (Appendix 5.2B).

The purpose of this step is to plan out the logistical aspects of the intervention. Planning exactly what is needed to accomplish each step of the intervention plan facilitates sustained implementation of the plan. For each intervention step, the consultant and implementer should work together to answer the following questions:

- **When?** When will this step of the intervention plan be completed? For steps occurring daily, this may mean a particular time of day (e.g., 9:00 A.M.) or a particular time period (e.g., during the morning meeting, during the fifth class period). For steps that occur only as needed, the type of behavior occurring prior to the step (i.e., the antecedent) can be described. Examples of this option may include “when students are off task” or “when students are showing appropriate behavior.” Some steps may include permanent products (e.g., posting a schedule, arranging the classroom in a way that minimizes crowding and distraction) and may only need to be completed once. For steps such as these, examples may include “At the beginning of the year” or “By next Tuesday.”

- **How often?** How often will this step of the intervention be completed? Examples may include “daily” or “as needed.” You may want to use this step to specify a goal for how often this step should be delivered. For example, behavior-specific praise could be described as being provided “at least 10 times per period.” For steps involving simple permanent products, such as posting behavioral expectations, “Once at the beginning of the year” may be appropriate.

- **For how long?** For how long will this intervention step last? Examples may include a specific length of time for more discrete steps (e.g., 5 minutes, 20 minutes). Some steps may not have a proscribed length of time to complete, and “as needed” may be appropriate. Steps involving one act that results in implementation across time (e.g., posting behavioral expectations in the classroom) may last all year.

- **Where?** Where will this intervention step occur? For school-based interventions, many (if not most) intervention steps may occur within the classroom. However, it may be appropriate to describe a specific place in the classroom (e.g., on the rug, on the calendar board, at the teacher’s desk) where each intervention step will occur. Likewise, consider if the intervention will be implemented across multiple school settings (e.g., hallway, bus, physical education, library). For home- or community-based interventions, specifying all possible locations where an intervention will take place is essential to considering feasibility, possible adaptations across settings, and needed resources, which could be different across all settings.

- **Resources needed?** What resources or materials (if any) are needed to complete this step? Examples of resources may include paper and pencil, materials for a specific lesson, or supplies for a reinforcement system (see Appendix 5.2C).

All of these responses can be listed on the Action Plan Worksheet, Part B (Appendix 5.2B). If the implementer struggles to identify the logistics of implementation, the Action Plan Sample Responses form (Appendix 5.2D) can be used to provide examples. It can also be helpful to ask questions such as “What would that step look like?” or “Talk me through the completion of that step.” These types of questions may help elicit responses from the implementer about how each step of the intervention will be completed. It is important to ensure that the implementer’s responses reflect his or her impressions of how the intervention will work in his or her context.

Step 6: Discuss How Needed Resources May Be Obtained, If Applicable

- Identify how, when, and by whom needed resources can be obtained.
- Record plan for obtaining resources on Action Plan Worksheet, Part C.

If additional materials are needed for the intervention steps, identify how those materials can be accessed. Is the implementer able to obtain them? Can you provide them or develop them, if necessary? Do others (e.g., an administrator or other professional) need to be approached to obtain the materials? In thinking about how to access materials, keep in mind that the quicker these resources are obtained, the faster the intervention can be implemented. If necessary resources cannot be obtained quickly, the implementation of the intervention may be delayed. Make sure to delineate what resources are needed, who is responsible for obtaining them, and by when the resources will be obtained on Action Plan Worksheet, Part C (Appendix 5.2C).

Step 7: Summarize the Action Plan

- Summarize revisions made (if applicable) and the logistical details of implementation.
- Praise the implementer for his or her participation in the process.

Review and summarize any revisions that have been made to the intervention plan and the logistical details that were determined for each intervention step. Summarizing the plan ensures that you and the implementer are on the same page about the action plan. Once the action plan has been reviewed, you should praise the implementer for participating in the process. This step completes the action planning process.

Step 8: Identify Potential Barriers to Implementation

- Ask the implementer to identify major anticipated or current barriers to intervention implementation.
- Ask the implementer to prioritize his or her top four barriers.
- Record barriers on Coping Plan Worksheet.

This is the first step in the Coping Planning process. First, you should show the implementer the Coping Plan Worksheet (Appendix 5.2E) and ask for any major anticipated or current barriers to implementing the intervention as outlined in the action plan. Make sure the barriers are identified by the implementer and thus reflect his or her issues with consistently delivering the intervention with high levels of intervention fidelity. Barriers may be related to intervention (e.g., remembering many new steps, implementing particularly challenging steps), the learner (e.g., strained relationship with the learner, being unsure if the learner will like the intervention), implementation (e.g., having sufficient time for preparation, managing the new responsibility), or context (e.g., how to support other individuals while engaging in implementation, having a supervisor who doesn't understand the

Quick Tip 5.2. Identifying Implementation Barriers



Some implementers may have difficulty coming up with barriers on their own. In this case, it can be helpful to provide the implementer with an example of a barrier related to a different intervention. For example, if the implementer is implementing an academic intervention, it would be appropriate to provide an example from a behavioral intervention. If the intervention targets one student, it may be appropriate to provide an example from an intervention that targets multiple students or an entire classroom.

importance of the intervention). Have the implementer rank up to four barriers in order of importance (1 = highest priority, 2 = second highest, etc.).

Step 9: Identify Potential Strategies to Address Barriers

- Brainstorm ways to maintain implementation in the presence of each barrier.
- Write identified strategies on the Coping Plan Worksheet.

Once barriers have been identified, problem-solve how to overcome them. Ask the implementer to brainstorm ways that the intervention can be maintained in the presence of each of the top four barriers. If the implementer struggles to identify strategies, provide suggestions or ideas in a collaborative manner. When identifying strategies, consider potential modifications to the intervention or implementation context (e.g., modifying implementer's other responsibilities, eliciting available support) as well as suggestions related to prompting and reinforcing implementation. For example, if the implementer has identified lack of time as an implementation barrier, work with him or her to identify possible ways to make the intervention or specific intervention steps more efficient or to reduce other responsibilities. Or, as is the case with the implementation of many behavioral interventions, you can describe how the intervention may save the implementer time if implemented effectively. For example, a behavior intervention designed to reduce or prevent challenging behaviors will, if effective, reduce the amount of time the implementer spends managing those behaviors. Once an appropriate strategy has been identified to address a barrier, it should be written on the Coping Plan Worksheet (Appendix 5.2E).

Step 10: Summarize Coping Planning

- Summarize the strategies identified to address barriers.
- Praise the implementer for his or her participation in the process.

This is the last step in the coping planning process. Summarize the strategies that have been developed to overcome the identified barriers to implementation. Confirm that the implementer believes that these strategies will help address the barriers. Next, praise the implementer for his or her participation in the coping planning process.

Step 11: Review the Meeting and Thank the Implementer

- Review the meeting discussion and decisions.
- Thank the implementer and close the meeting.

To complete this last step, review the process of implementation planning and ask the implementer if he or she has any questions related to (1) the revisions made to the intervention plan (if applicable), (2) the logistics of implementation, (3) who is responsible for obtaining any needed resources and by when this will be accomplished, and/or (4) the identified barriers and related strategies to maintain implementation. Once all questions have been answered, inform the implementer that you will provide a clean, typed copy of the implementation plan and obtain any resources for which you are responsible. Finally, thank the implementer for his or her time and work during the implementation planning process.

FOLLOW-UP AFTER IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

To cement the discussion and the progress made during implementation planning, we suggest that you engage in some activities after the session. Follow-up after implementation planning involves five steps, outlined in Box 5.4 and described below.

Review session notes to ensure that the strategy was delivered as planned. To do so, check the Implementation Planning Guide (Appendix 5.1) and complete a self-assessment using the Fidelity Data Sheet for Implementation Planning (Appendix 5.3) to see if you addressed each of the strategy steps. If you missed any steps, follow up with the implementer. It is important to make sure that the strategies were delivered as planned so that they have the most likelihood of impacting the implementer. If there were any adaptations made to the intervention plan during action planning, *update the intervention plan.* Next, *complete the Summary Report for Implementation Planning* (Appendix 5.4) to document the logistics as well as the strategies to address anticipated barriers identified during implementation planning. Share the updated materials with the implementer as soon as possible. *Obtain any resources for which you are responsible* according to the Action Plan Worksheet, Part B (Appendix 5.2B) and give them to the implementer as soon as possible. Last, *check in with the implementer following the meeting to touch base about intervention fidelity and answer his or her questions.* This follow-up will ensure that the implementer

BOX 5.4. Follow-Up Steps after Implementation Planning

1. Review session notes to ensure that the strategy was delivered as planned.
2. Update intervention plan, as needed.
3. Complete the Summary Report for Implementation Planning (Appendix 5.4).
4. Obtain any resources for which you are responsible.
5. Check in with the implementer following the meeting to touch base about intervention fidelity and answer his or her questions.



feels comfortable delivering the intervention after the meeting and that his or her questions have been answered. Confirm that the implementer knows how to contact you with any questions about the intervention or its implementation.

SUMMARY

Implementation planning prepares the implementer to deliver an intervention by outlining, in detail, the logistics of each individual step of the intervention as well as by identifying barriers to implementation and strategies to overcome those barriers. It was developed to act as a link between intending to and engaging in a new behavior (in this case, intervention implementation), based on a theory in health psychology, and has been documented as effective with varied implementers responsible for individualized, targeted, and group interventions. To support the implementer, we recommend that this strategy be implemented, alone or in conjunction with direct training, before the intervention is implemented. It can also be updated if intervention fidelity is low during the delivery of the intervention. At the conclusion of the implementation planning session, the implementer will be ready to deliver the intervention, which has been adapted to his or her context and clearly delineated, with high levels of intervention fidelity.

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