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## An Overview of Functional Communication Training for Registered Behavior Technicians

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Christopher Dollinger, Student

Dr. Amy D. Spriggs, Major Professor

Dr. Melinda J. Ault, Director of Graduate Studies

An Overview of Functional Communication Training for Registered Behavior  
Technicians

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THESIS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Science in the  
College of Education  
at the University of Kentucky

By

Christopher Dollinger

University of Kentucky

Director: Dr. Amy D. Spriggs, Professor of Special

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2022

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## ABSTRACT

Functional Communication Training (FCT) is an intervention involving the differential reinforcement of an alternative response (DRA), in which an appropriate communicative response (e.g., asking for a break) is reinforced while the behavior targeted for decrease (e.g., hitting to get out of work) has reinforcement withheld in its presence. Individuals who work as registered behavior technicians (RBT), under the supervision of a board-certified behavior analyst (BCBA), may implement FCT daily. With that being said, many individuals who choose to work as an RBT may not have as deep of an understanding of the concepts and principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA) when compared to an individual such as a BCBA who completed higher education coursework relating directly to ABA. While RBTs are initially trained on the principles of ABA when completing an online learning course to become certified, this training covers a broad range of topics at a surface level. When considering the various principles of ABA that an RBT must become familiar with, it is understandable that this training course is unable to cover these topics extensively. However, to provide effective services as an RBT, a deeper level of understanding of these principles is imperative. A module was created to provide an overview and introduction to FCT and illustrate how it could be implemented in practice from the perspective of an RBT.

**Key words:** functional communication training, registered behavior technician, applied behavior analysis, differential reinforcement of alternative behaviors

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An Overview of Functional Communication Training for Registered Behavior  
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## INTRODUCTION TO THESIS

### An Overview of Functional Communication Training for Registered Behavior Technicians

This thesis project was designed to teach Functional Communication Training (FCT) to Registered Behavior Technicians who provide direct services to individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The format of the learning content was presented through an online learning module. The content of the module was based upon the literature and previous research reviewed, and contained video lectures, discussion posts, and various other methods of content delivery to promote learner engagement with the module. The learning module begins with providing a brief overview and introduction to FCT to introduce the intervention and provide the learner with the research that led to the initial creation of FCT and follows by describing the criteria for evidence-based practices and informing the learner how FCT has been established as an evidence-based practice for individuals with ASD or other developmental and intellectual disabilities. The module then details the functions of behavior as related to FCT, provides the learner with a detailed and comprehensive list of the steps for implementing FCT in practice, describes different systems that FCT may be implemented with, and finally provides the learner with the appropriate and correct steps to properly train caregivers on the implementation process of FCT. Each of the five lessons within this module contain an objective and rationale statement to provide the learner with an idea of the direction each module aims to travel in. Additionally, the learning module contains a pre and post-test containing 15 questions that were designed based upon the objectives and rationales for each lesson. The pre and post-test provides feedback with an explanation and a rationale for the correct answer. The module and its included lessons are formatted and ordered in a manner that provides introductory information, expands upon the introduction, and then provides in depth examples of implementation aspects as they are related to a Registered Behavior Technician's job responsibilities. The module includes directions and prompts to assist the learner in navigating the required supplemental materials (e.g., handouts, discussion posts, article readings). This learning module was designed and developed for Registered Behavior Technicians to complete as a supplemental tool to provide the learner with a learning course that may allow them to provide more detailed care when providing direct Applied Behavior Analysis therapeutic services. The attached appendix includes a link to the learning module which contains the materials and showcases the project in its entirety. Registration for the module is free.

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Christopher Dollinger

*(Name of Student)*

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04/18/2022

Date

## APPENDIX

<https://christopher-s-school-98d8.thinkific.com/courses/thesis-course-module>

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## VITA

The author of this thesis project, Christopher Dollinger, was born in Marietta, Georgia, and has completed this project in pursuit of a master's degree in applied behavior analysis at the University of Kentucky. The author obtained a bachelor's degree in psychology at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia.