

# CDDS

**Centre for**

**Developmental**

**Disability**

**Studies**



The University of Sydney

## The Apex Behaviour Management Program

A Program to Help Parents Reduce  
Severe Behaviour Problems in Young  
Children With Developmental  
Disabilities.



## Researchers :

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# Behaviour Problems and Developmental Disability. Background

- 40% of children with developmental disabilities have severe behaviour problems (disruptive/challenging behaviours)
- These behaviours include:
  - aggression
  - self-injury
  - property destruction, and
  - severe tantrums



# Behaviour Problems and Developmental Disability.

- These problems usually emerge during early childhood.
- If left untreated these problems tend to persist.
- Up to 35 % of adults with developmental disabilities continue to have frequent and severe behaviour problems.

# Consequences

- The risk of injury to the child and to others.
- Damage to property.
- Possible exclusions from preschool or school, social and recreational opportunities.
- In severe cases, these problems may lead to out-of-home placement.

# Consequences

- Stress on parents and siblings- often leading to family dysfunction
- Restriction of opportunities for parents and siblings (anecdotal from groups)
- Cost to the community



# Apex Behaviour Management Program

Aim:

to trial a technique which could:

- ✓ reduce behaviour problems in young children with developmental disabilities.
- ✓ taught to parents.



# The Apex Behaviour Management Program

Inspiration.

Carr et al. (1994). *Communication-based interventions for problem behavior*.  
Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

*Functional communication training*– one of the most effective treatments for severe behaviour problems in young children with developmental disabilities.

# Functional Communication Training

## Theory:

- problem behaviours seen as attempts to communicate needs and wishes, when other more adaptive forms of communication are unavailable, or do not come readily.
- over time these attempts to communicate are reinforced.

# Functional Communication Training

## Aim:

- To **identify** the *communicative purpose* of problem behaviour.

*“what the child is trying to communicate using problem behaviour.”*

- To **teach** an alternative form of communication that will replace problem behaviour.

# Functional Communication Training

Further support for the appropriateness of this approach:

- behaviour problems in young children without disabilities reduce as communication skills improve.
- communication difficulties common in children with developmental disabilities.



## The Apex Behaviour Management Program

Inspiration.

Wacker et al. (1998). *Dev & Beh Ped*, 19, 260-266.

Parents were able to learn how to use this technique in the home.

## **Functional Communication Training**

Limitations of this method of delivery:

Numerous individual consultations  
make it resource intensive  
and therefore costly,



# The Apex Behaviour Management Program

Aim:

to determine whether

**Functional Communication Training**

could be delivered to parents

in small groups ?



# Apex Behaviour Management Program

Target population:

Sydney Metropolitan Area

Parents of children

- ✓ 2 to 7 years of age
- ✓ developmental disability
- ✓ delay in communication skills
- ✓ severe problem behaviours (that are of concern to the parents)



# Apex Behaviour Management Program

## Funding:

- Apex Foundation For Research Into Developmental Disabilities Limited (pilot project)
- National Health and Medical Research Council



# The Apex Behaviour Management Program

- Pilot study:

“fine tuning the format” ,  
gaining feedback from families.

- Current Study

groups vs. individual delivery

Are they equally effective?



# Apex Behaviour Management Program

## -Format

- Training provided to 36 families – (18 in small groups– 3 to 4 couples/single parents and 18 seen individually)
- Individual delivery – random allocation
- 3 fortnightly meetings – 4 hours each



# Apex Behaviour Management Program

## Follow-up

- Monthly telephone contact for 3 months
- Follow-up data mail out – 3, 6 and 12 months
- Review meeting offered at 6 months



# Apex Behaviour Management Program

Data collected

- at intake

- Developmental Behaviour Checklist (DBC)
- The Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales



# Apex Behaviour Management Program

## Data collected

- Prior to program

- Behaviour Indication Assessment Scale (BIAS)
- Behaviour chart (- rating of frequency of behaviour problems daily for 14 days)
- Measures of stress/resources/parental health (3 questionnaires)



## Apex Behaviour Management Program

Data collected -at follow-up

✓ 3, 6 & 12 months:

DBC, BIAS, Behaviour Rating Chart

✓ 6 and 12 months

Measures of stress/resources/health

✓ 3 months - Treatment Acceptability

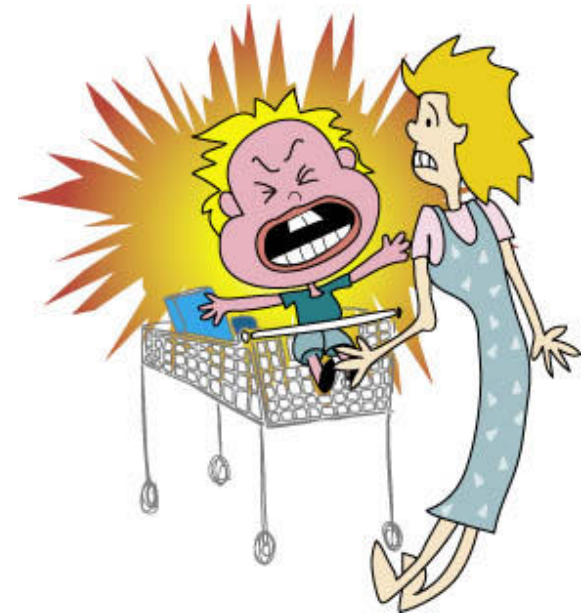
✓ 6 months - Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales

# Functional Communication Training - What is taught

The **purpose** (communicative intent) of problem behaviour:

to communicate needs and wants

- attention
- tangible
- escape
- \*sensory (\*non-social & not as common)



## Functional Communication Training

- Need to identify the main purpose – the want or need the child is having the most difficulty communicating as a starting point

*To do this we use:*

- Descriptions of incidents
- Standardised questionnaire  
(Motivation Assessment Scale)

# Behaviour Record

Date:

Time:

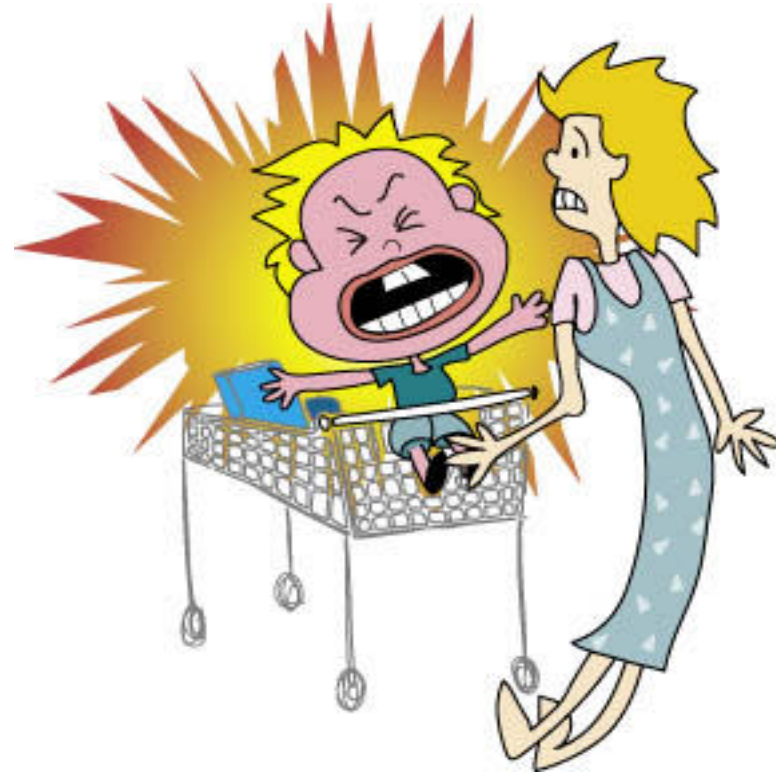
What was happening at the time of the incident:

What happened:

What followed:

# Without Accurate Records –How Do We Know?

- **Attention ?**
- **Tangible ?**
- **Escape ?**
- **Sensory ?**



# Functional Communication Training

## Features

Ensuring that the form of communication chosen to replace problem behaviour is:

- ✓ easy to use
- ✓ efficient at conveying the message to others
- ✓ is reinforced and p.b. not reinforced

## Functional Communication Training

- Technique is individualised for the **current** communication needs/potential of each child.  
e.g. simple speech, gestures, signing, picture exchange, augmented communication.
- Parents are taught how to adapt this in the future when the child's skills improve.



# Apex Behaviour Management Program

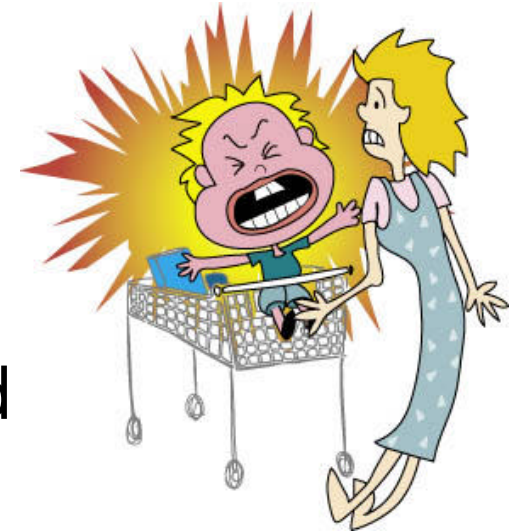
- Parents trial the technique during the program and fine tune where necessary.
- Information is provided to assist other carers in encouraging the new communication skills.



# Apex Behaviour Management Program

## Other issues discussed

- Teaching “waiting”
- Crisis management – when not to teach a new skill
- Planning for crises
- Problem solving and planning ahead





# Apex Behaviour Management Program

## Other issues discussed.

- Encouraging choice making.
- Having appropriate and consistent expectations, demands, limits, and reinforcers.
- Helping with transition times.
- Differing views between parents/carers and the need for a compromise position.



# Apex Behaviour Management Program A case study.

"Marco"

- age 3 at time of referral
- "mild autism"
- Mild developmental delay
- Language skills at the 14 month level
- Severe tantrums with hitting and screaming.

## “Communicative Purpose” of tantrums

1. To gain *attention*
2. To gain *access to tangibles.*

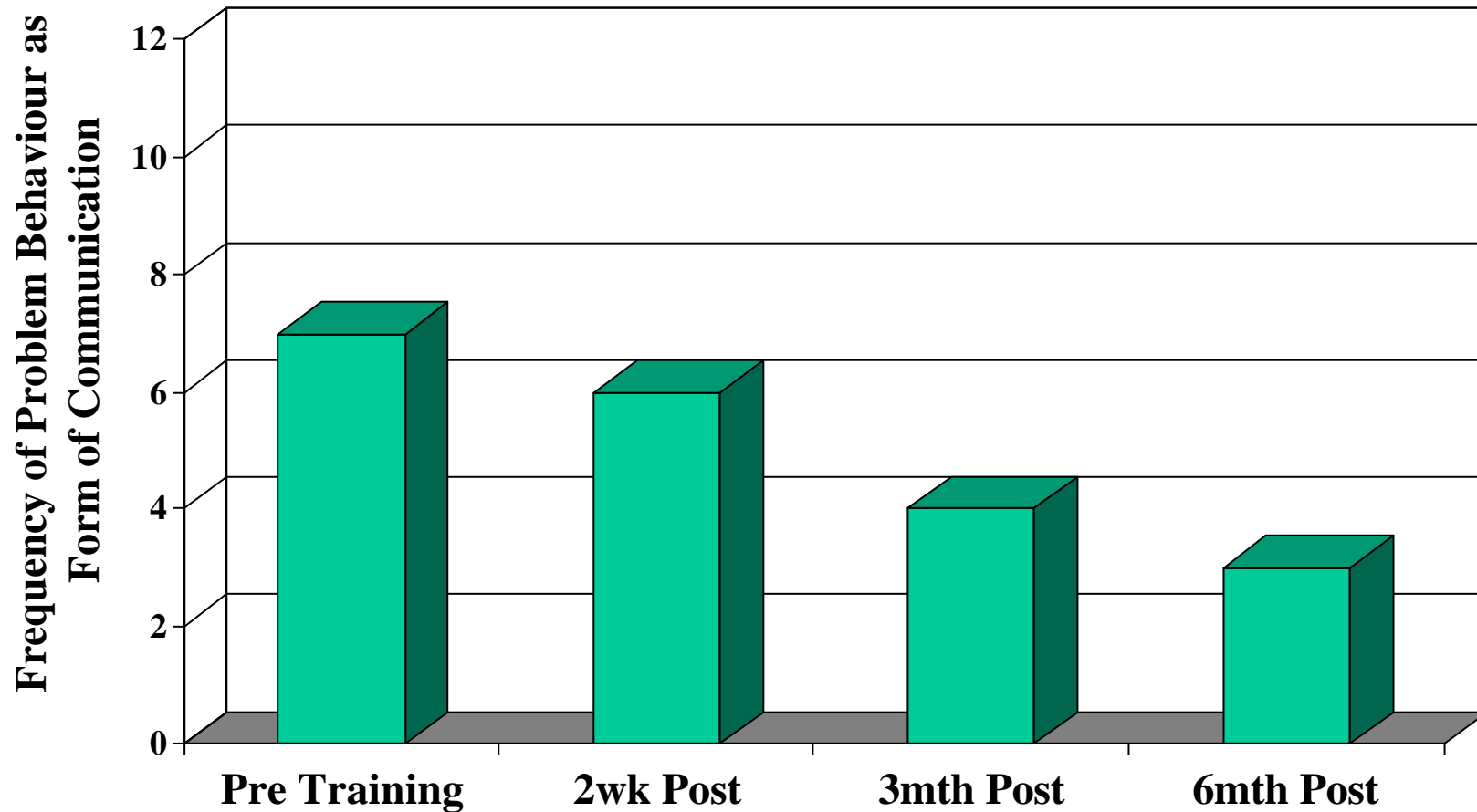
## Alternatives taught

Initially: Taking mother by hand to gain attention

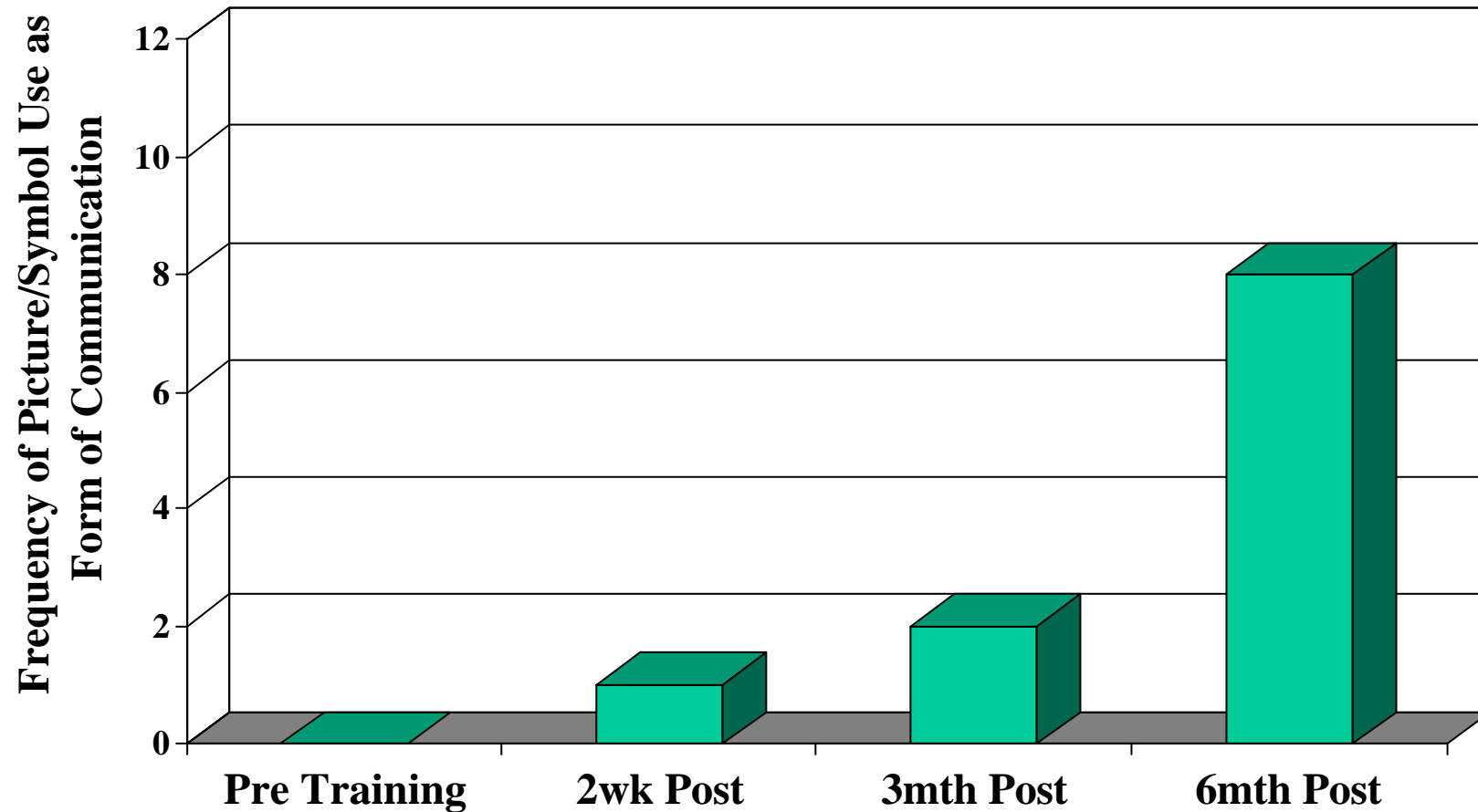
Then later as skills improved:

picture exchange introduced to gain tangibles.

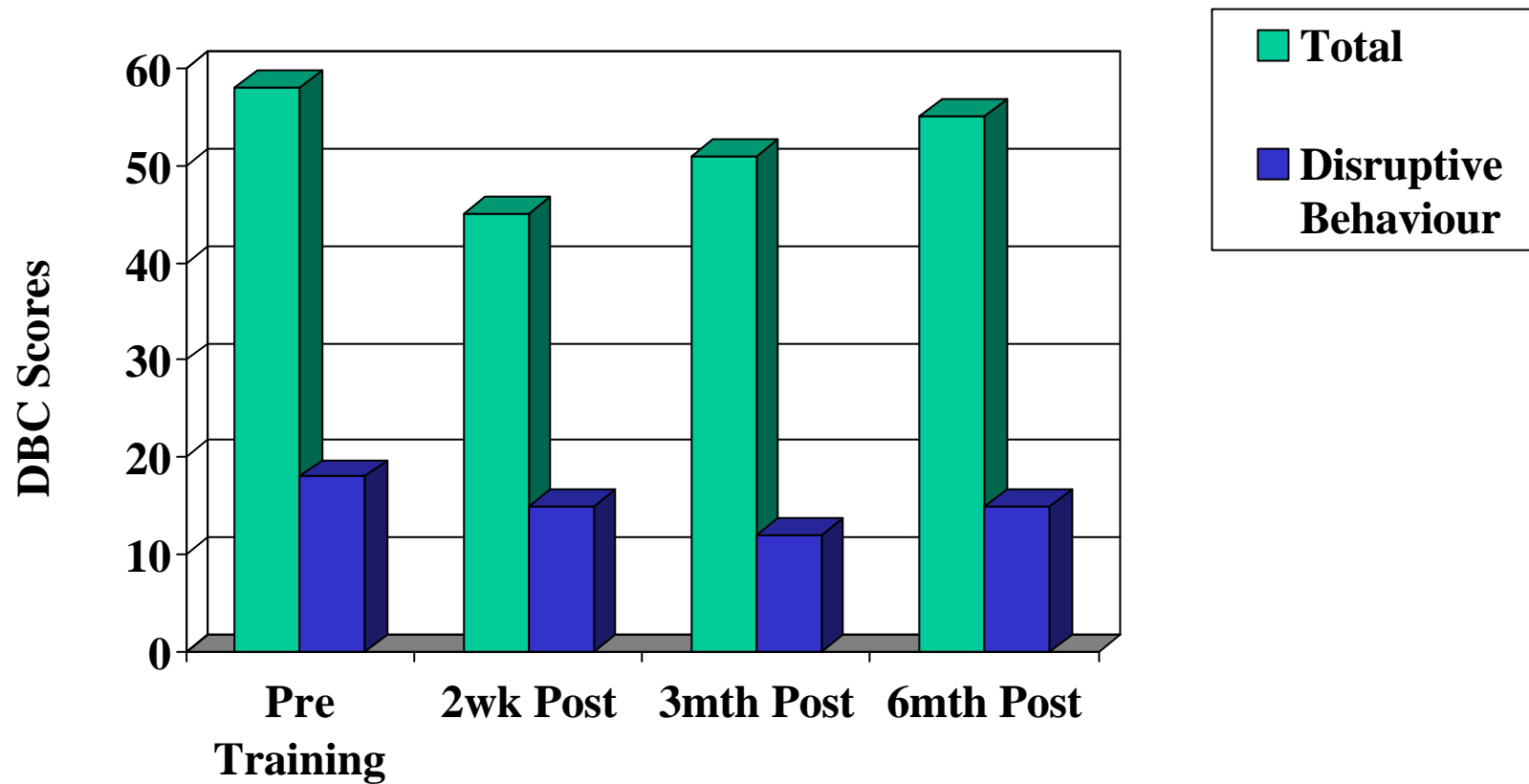
# “Behavioral Indication Assessment Scale”



# Behavioral Indication Assessment Scale



# Developmental Behaviour Checklist





# The Apex Behaviour Management Program

## Feedback from pilot study

Parents ratings of the technique were all very positive.

Parents can be taught to understand and apply the technique, although some struggle with 'ignoring the inappropriate behaviours' and consistent limit setting.



## Apex Behaviour Management Program

- Parents need for support services and how these help families to put an intervention into place.
  - stress.
  - allowing both parents to attend.

# Support

Parents gain support from each other

- Reducing the sense of isolation
- Opportunities to discuss issues that they feel friends/family members/ professionals- may not understand but other parents do'.
- Practical tips



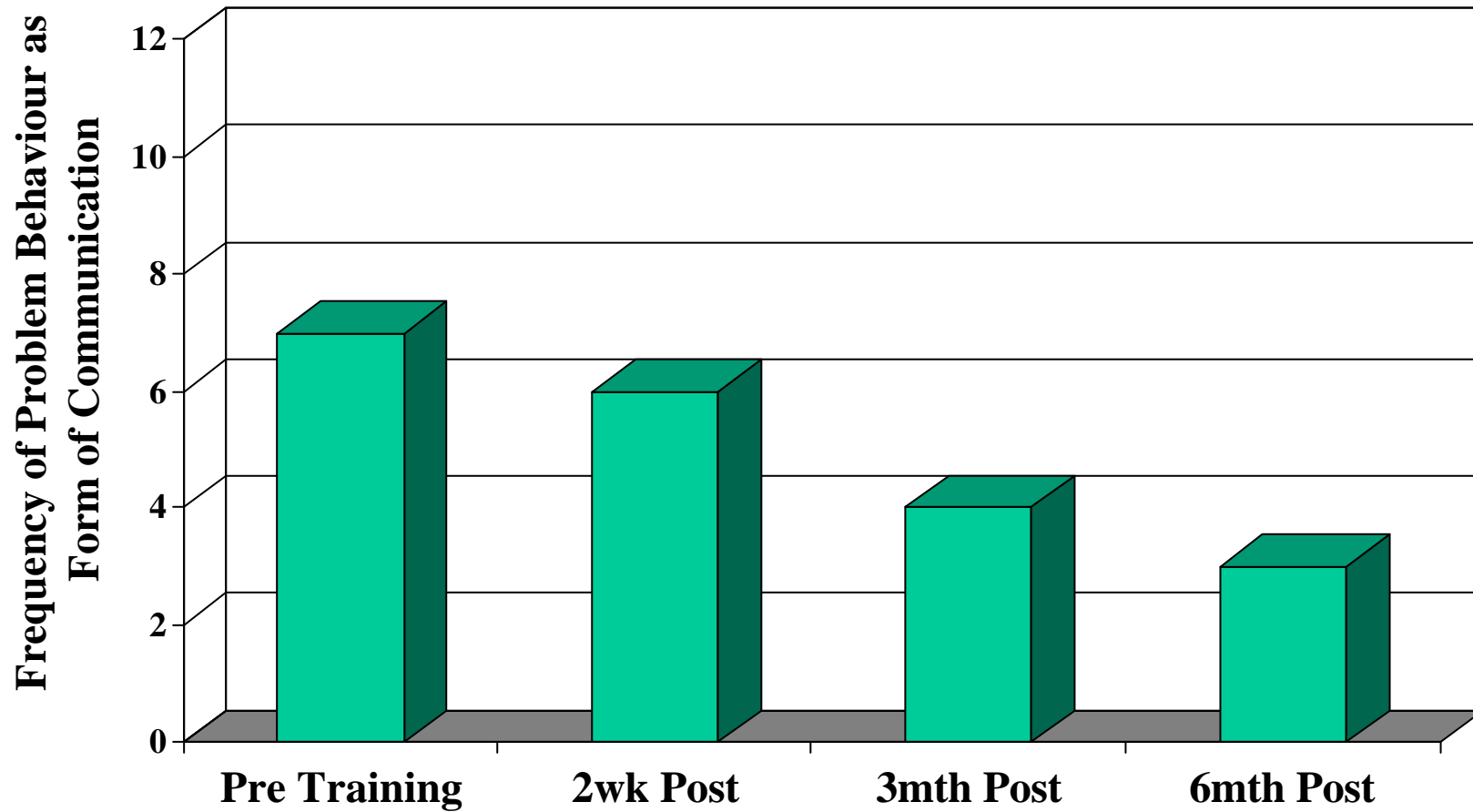
# The Apex Behaviour Management Program

Referrals:

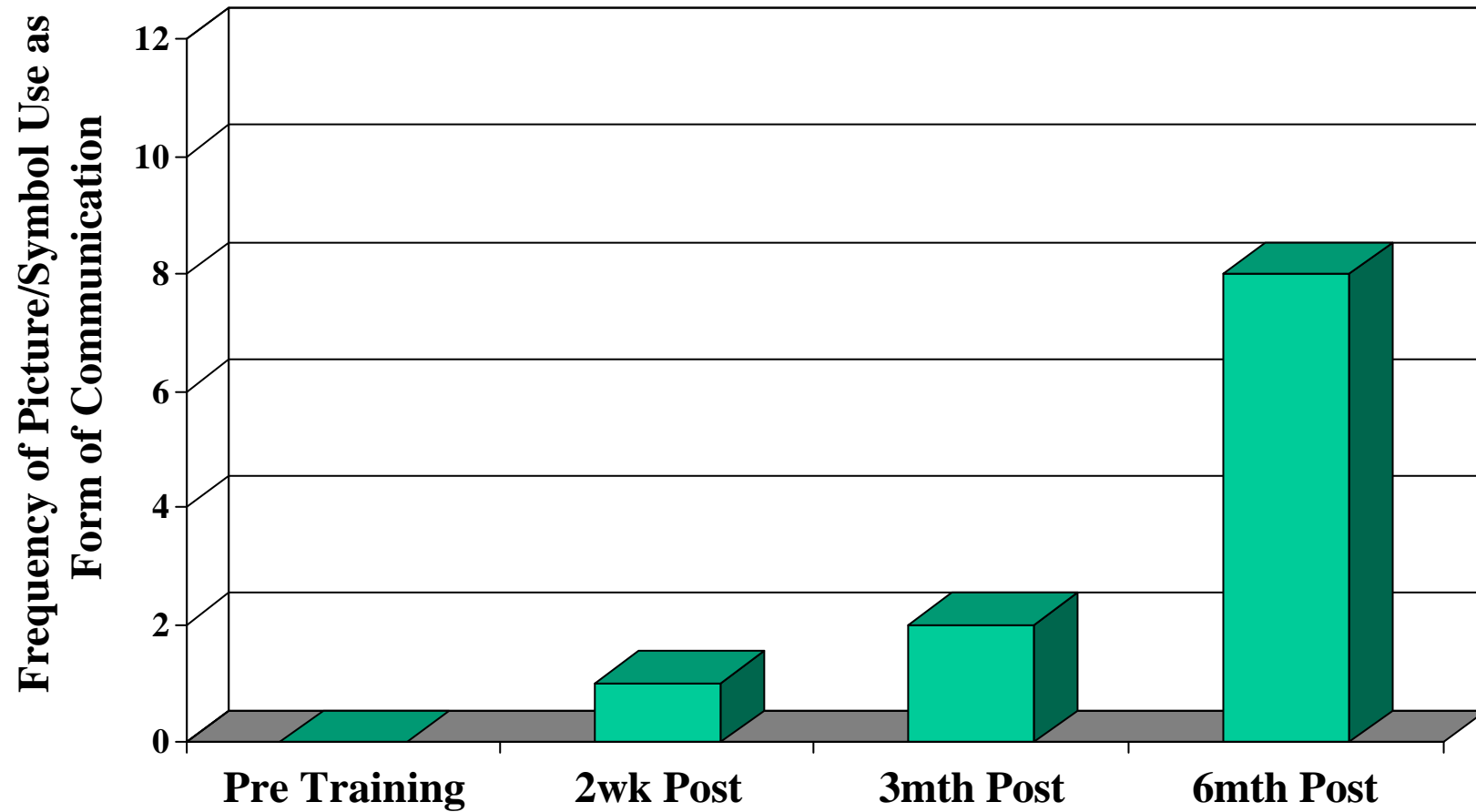
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# Behavioral Indication Assessment Scale



# Behavioral Indication Assessment Scale



# Developmental Behaviour Checklist

